

S THE SWORD

SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION:
A MUST FOR TODAY

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*This book is lovingly
dedicated to my dear
husband without whose
constant understanding,
encouragement and
support it would not
have been possible.*

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Foreword

Why the Lord would choose a weak, unworthy woman, such as I, to promote such a powerful message is one of the great mysteries of eternity. When I narrowly escaped death at age 29, my doctor gave me a dismal prognosis. He let it be known that although I “could live to be 60” in his opinion, this was about as likely as the sun rising in the west.

I was already several years into borrowed time when the mantle for *Sword of the Spirit Ministries* fell on my shoulders. Although I was a mediocre Christian with mediocre abilities, the Lord has made me a product of the ministry He so lovingly laid in my lap. As I myself began to take the Sword of the Spirit, as I began to memorize Scripture, not just a verse here and there, but in context — by chapter and by book — I began to glimpse the unharnessed power, the overwhelming joy, and the awesome potential of *knowing God* in a way that is unknown to most Christians today.

I pray that the Lord will use this book to propel you into a spiritual adventure more exciting, more wonderful, more dynamic than anything you have yet experienced in your Christian life.

Before You Begin

The Bible is a book of all books and cannot just be read, or memorized, and understood, as other books. There is a prerequisite involved, a bond of fellowship with the Author that must be realized. Do you personally know the Author of the Bible? If not, it will be important for you to read this introduction before delving into the text.

If you know only the English language, it would be impossible for you to read a book written in German, wouldn't it? What would you think about a language that is not even from this world, a language that is, as it were, from *outer space*? Do you think you would be able to understand it without some special insight and discernment?

The Bible is such a book. It is a book written by God, our Creator, to us, His creatures. Because it is God's book, written in His language, it's impossible for us to understand it without insight and discernment that can only be conveyed by His Holy Spirit. Just as it would be foolish for someone who doesn't understand German to try to read a book written in German, the Lord tells us:

...the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (I Corinthians 2:14, NKJV)

The Sword

So, how can we tap into this special language of Scripture? Unlike other books, in order for us to understand this unique Book, we must have a *personal* relationship with the Author so that He might *personally* communicate His truth to us. But how can this be accomplished? God is completely holy and cannot tolerate sin in any form and we are a sinful people. The Bible is careful to point this out. Romans 3:23 tells us: *...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...* We all must admit that we need not look any further than our own mirror to see a sinner. And since our sin has separated us from God, what do we do?

Before the beginning of time, our great and loving God anticipated our dilemma. He loved us and longed to communicate with us. So in His timing, He sent His beloved Son to convey His message of love. Jesus was born as a man. He was tempted in every way, as we are, but did not once digress. He died a horrible, humiliating death on a cruel cross, and when He did, God placed all of our sins and the sins of the whole world on His shoulders. Scripture tells us:

God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. (II Corinthians 5:21)

When we acknowledge Jesus as our God and Savior from sin, we give Him our sin and God places His righteousness on us. God then sees us as righteous, not because we are, but because we have Jesus in our heart and life, and He is righteousness personified. If you have never

Before You Begin

done it before why don't you just bow your head right now, acknowledge your sin and ask Jesus to come into your heart and life to be your very own *personal* Lord and Savior?

With Jesus as your Savior, you become a member of God's family. You then have His Holy Spirit as your teacher to lead you into the wonderful truths of His Word. Now, read on and learn about the blessings of making the powerful Word of God a practical part of your life.



Chapter 1

LIFE IN FAST FORWARD

The 20th Century: era of gadgets, glitter and grandeur; television, telephones and travel; cam-corders, computers and corruption; prosperity, progress and promiscuity. Who in the demure world of yesterday could ever have imagined that they would spawn such a generation: travel faster than sound; communication that circles the globe in seconds; technology so hot many products are obsolete by the time we get them home; life on the edge of outer space is ours. Unique in all of history, we stand.

Never before has life whirled at such a pace. Never before has the Christian Church faced the dilemma that challenges the daily existence of this generation: the volley of pressures, temptations and decisions; the frenzy; the affluence; the apathy. Yes, our place in history is unique. Our circumstances are unique. Our problems are unique.

With every aspect of life seemingly revved up to a heightened state of acceleration, it may not be surprising that many try to fit their Christian experience into this same frame of reference. Christians in record numbers flock to conferences, retreats, seminars and sessions in what seems like a frantic attempt to grab godliness on the run.

The Sword

Professionals lavish predigested teaching in mega-doses on ravenous appetites, while the faithful struggle to absorb as much as possible in the allotted time before rushing back to their whirlwind schedules.

As vehicles take off in a cloud of dust, one can almost hear the Gentle Shepherd calling after them, “Hey, wait for me!” I wonder, if we actually heard Him call, would we stop? Could we stop? Just how does the Gentle Shepherd fit into this Nuclear Age?

A Slower Pace

In another world, in another culture, perhaps even for the greater part, at another time, in sharp contrast to our scrambled existence are some who march to the beat of a different drum. In secluded woods on the outskirts of villages in Russia, live “holy” men known as “*poustinikki*” (*pou* - pronounced as in you; *poustinikki* - plural for *poustinik*). With deep roots in the tsarist era, they have survived the scourge of communism and are reportedly still in existence even today.

In this far removed context there are those who, from all levels of the social spectrum, have responded literally to the compelling challenge that Jesus extended to the rich young man in Matthew 19:21:

*“...go, sell your possessions and give to the poor,
and you will have treasure in heaven. Then
come, follow Me.”*

Even Tsar Alexander I is thought by many to have entered a poustinia (home of the poustinik). Great mystery

surrounds his many years of absence.

Answering the call, a poustinik distributes his earthly wealth to the poor and leaves friends and family to embark on a life of solitude, service and prayer. A simple ankle-length robe tied with a cord at the waist is his usual summertime attire, and he takes only a linen bag containing a loaf of bread, some salt, one book, a Bible, and a gourd of water.

The poustinik usually occupies a deserted hut on the edge of a village, or one built with the help of villagers who always welcome his presence. He usually plants a vegetable garden, fishes in a river or stream, cuts wood for his stove to keep warm in winter and tries to earn a living. He also does such things as weaving baskets to give to those in need. His door is latched only against the wind. Anyone is welcomed day or night for whatever reason. What food he has is offered to his guests even though it may be only a piece of bread. Those needing help come to the poustinia for prayer, or counseling, or physical assistance, for any contribution he can make to their lives. Sometimes a poustinik spends weeks helping to gather in crops or whatever the need of the villagers might be, realizing that to serve his God is to serve his fellow man.

The only book in the poustinia is a Bible which the poustinik reads on his knees. Academic questions or profound analysis are of little interest to him. He often reads only a few sentences or a single page in a whole day and in long meditation permits the truth of the Word to take root in his heart.

Those who have known them say that poustinikki always radiate the quiet joy of the Lord. They maintain that a sad poustinik is not a true poustinik but is a hypocrite

and a liar. To them, eyes tell the story. Even though the face may be that of an old man (or woman) they say the eyes of a true poustinik are those of a child.

In her book, *Poustinia*, Catherine de Hueck Doherty tells about her father's experience with a close friend. Peter was a member of the nobility, the oldest son of an old Russian family, a millionaire by today's standards. One day he announced to Catherine's father, "Theodore, I have been reading the gospels and I have decided, as so many before me, to accept them literally."

He turned over his real estate to his family and proceeded to withdraw his bank accounts in coins of gold and silver. These he stuffed in sacks which he piled into a heavy horse drawn cart about the size of a 1 to 1½ ton truck. In the slums of Petrograd, the two of them distributed his wealth, family by family, house by house. When all was disbursed, Peter said, "And now I must go." Mrs. Doherty writes:

So they returned to his house where on his bed, there was laid out a linen tunic. He took a linen bag, a loaf of bread and in another little linen bag, he took some salt. He also had a gourd of water and a staff. On foot, my father walking with him, he went through the streets of Petrograd. My father accompanied him to the outskirts of the city and into the country roads. The last he saw of him was just a silhouette against the setting sun, a man in a long garment with a staff in his hand. He had no cash in his pockets (he had no pockets), nor in his bag. He had only some bread, water, salt and a staff. Not even shoes. That was all.*

Such complete abandonment of all the things we *couldn't live without* is hard for us to fathom. In our culture, such actions would be considered unnecessary, unwise and irrational. One thing, however, is very clear: the poustinik *put his money where his mouth was*. What he had of this world's goods he held loosely. He kept nothing back. He was ready at any time to relinquish anything and everything if he perceived this to be the Lord's will for him.

It's true, such a pristine existence does not lend itself to our culture, but is there just a little tug at your heart strings to experience a *quiet place* to meet with your Lord alone in your own private *poustinia*? Could it be that in order for us to survive the persistent surge of activity, the increasing wickedness and sensuous materialism, it is becoming ever more urgent for us to make room in our lives for such a place? Is our Lord running after you, longing for the moment when you will slow down long enough to meet with Him in a *quiet place*?

He has said to us:

Be still, and know that I am God. (Psalm 46:10)

Perhaps you've tried, but your schedule is so crowded you can't ever fit it in. Or maybe you've experienced erratic success, but haven't been able to establish a pattern in your life. "Just how does one establish a 'calm oasis' in the midst of a chaotic existence?" you may ask.

Radical change in perspective and lifestyle does not spring *tra la* from mere desire. Desire is the beginning, but change must grow. And perhaps 21st Century change requires 21st Century perspective.

Your Personal Computer

In many ways we are like computers. We constantly feed data into the computer of our heart and mind. Nor is our biological computer ever turned off. Everything we see, everything we hear, everything we read, or say — basically everything we feed into our mind — goes into a memory bank to form our own personal database. And just as an electronic computer performs on the basis of what is fed into it, the database we have accumulated in our heart and mind predictably determines our attitude and actions.

Solomon said it:

...as (a man) thinks in his heart, so is he.... (Proverbs 23:7, NKJV)

What you spend your time thinking about is *you*. Your agenda and the direction of your life is determined by your thought life and the database you have established. It follows then that the place to defeat Satan is at the point of what we take into our minds and let our minds feed upon. We can't plant thistles and expect to grow daisies.

Satan is very aware of this. This is why he systematically works to control what we see, hear, read,

and think about, any communication that exposes us to his deception and perversion. He knows that if he can control the input of our computer, he can control our life.

One can hardly avoid the influence of magazines, newspapers, radio, TV — the ever present media which often seems bent on injecting corrupt and lewd thinking into every situation. To even watch or read the news frequently opens our minds and thoughts to unspeakable things committed by those who have inadvertently or even blatantly given themselves over to satanic ends. Commercials of innocuous products are often designed to induce lewd and lustful thinking.

To live and work in this world is to be exposed to satanic influence that can become so commonplace, so much a part of our lives, we may tend to just accept it as norm. We, as God's children, need to be aware that we are being systematically led down a "primrose path" of sinister evil and we must take conscious steps to resist and counteract this trend in our lives.

Solomon cautioned us:

Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. (Proverbs 4:23)

Changing Your Data-Base

If you're having trouble keeping up with yourself and find that you have no time for the Lord or if you feel you're not growing spiritually the way you'd like to, perhaps you should check the data you're feeding into your computer. If you're not delighting in doing God's will, if

you see yourself constantly yielding ground to the enemy, it may be that you have become a victim of this world's secular agenda that has accumulated in your database and is controlling your life.

Consider for just a moment: What percentage of time do you spend thinking about Scripture and the things of the Lord versus the time you spend focused on the things of this world? Do you see any kind of balance between the two? In this world of sin and corruption, it isn't easy to avoid being completely swept away by the swirl of activity and the rationale of the great deceiver. But to progress spiritually we need to be aware of what is happening and to take definite steps to combat it.

When you hear teaching presented by others you may hear *about* God's Word and experience a challenge, encouragement, inspiration, blessings, and lots of warm "fuzzies". But, if you want to permanently change the direction of your life, it must grow from deeper roots. David knew this. Look at his comment in Psalm 40:8:

I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart. (KJV)

Why did David delight to do God's will? Was it merely a *desire* that translated into a holy life? Not according to this Scripture. David planned it. He fed the necessary data into his biological computer. Even though he obviously didn't know about computers, he knew the principle just the same. By memorizing God's Word, he was feeding unadulterated truth into the computer of his heart and mind. Thus it controlled his thinking and translated into the delight of living a righteous life. True,

David took a nose dive or two, but, even so, the Lord says of him:

“I have found David son of Jesse a man after My own heart.” (Acts 13:22)

I'd settle for that, wouldn't you?

Psalms 119:11 is a benchmark for Christians and you will find it referred to often in the pages of this book. The Psalmist's bold assertion does not assume alternatives:

I have hidden (God's) word in my heart that I might not sin against (Him).

Consider again: Why did the Psalmist hide God's word in his heart? He says it was because he wanted to live a godly life. He wanted victory over sin. So he applied the sure formula. He knew that by memorizing God's word, by hiding it in his heart, his desires and decisions would be pre-programmed. Both of these verses firmly attest to the fact that memorizing God's Word, hiding it in our hearts, translates into positive attitudes and godly actions.

Perhaps you're thinking, "I've memorized a few verses of Scripture here and there". Let me ask, what impact do they have on your daily life? What portion of your time do you spend thinking about them? Do those few verses counterbalance the world's endless barrage, designed to keep you focused on its agenda? Surely greater reservoirs of God's Word are needed. Although the idea of memorizing whole chapters and books of Scripture may seem overwhelming, many have

found it be a source of joy and power and, indeed, a life changing adventure.

In the words of one housewife and mother of four:

Memorizing Scripture opens our senses to the Lord, enabling us to hear His voice, know His character, see His blessings, feel His peace.

Before hiding God's Word in my heart, I worried about everything, speculated people's motives and overate using food as a comfort device. The Lord has dramatically changed my old struggles and shown me how to turn from evil and do good. His peace floods my soul.

After I read some booklets from *Sword of the Spirit Ministries*, the Holy Spirit helped me to memorize Colossians and James in a short time with great pleasure. If a scatter brained person like me can do it, anyone can. It inspired me to devour God's Word, feasting at His table while renewing my mind daily.

Having books memorized equips me to worship and meditate during traffic jams, long drives, while cleaning the house and in bed, when I'm too lazy to turn on the light.

This exciting approach to Scripture memory will revitalize your thought life and lifestyle. Watch how entertaining the Bible is as you let the Word of Christ richly dwell in you. He will help you accomplish what's critical by eliminating the trivial.

Memorizing Scripture is like opening a window in a musty room to feel the fresh breeze on your face.

If you're overwhelmed by the pace your life has taken; if you're finding that, despite your good intentions, the things of this world are gobbling up your time so that you have little or none left for the Lord; if your good resolutions are swept away with the pressures of the moment; if your honorable desires aren't translating into actions, then you're aware that the mere desire for change is not enough.

If you really want the focus of your life to change, the psalmists have given you the formula. You must program it into your computer. You must hide God's word in your heart, feed His pure, unadulterated truth into the computer of your heart and mind by *memorizing the Scriptures*. This is the powerful antidote that will counteract the materialistic, ungodly input that constantly bombards our lives, an influence designed to render us as puppets in the hands of our great adversary.

Your Own Private Poustinia

In his serene, unhurried world, the poustinik spent hours and days on his knees meditating on Scripture. This luxury seems foreign to our existence, but we can have this same, constant input from God's Word in our life. When we store Scripture in our memory bank, we have constant access to its strength and power. We have our own little *poustinia* with us wherever we go.

We can meditate on Scripture any moment of the day or night. It's there for solace, for insight, for direction, for guidance. It's there when we go to work and there when we come home. It's there when we vacuum the carpet or mow the lawn. It's there when we rock the baby or ride in the car. It's there when the seas are rough and when they are calm. It's there in the long, dark, wakeful hours of the night and when the sun shines brightly at midday.

The poustinik at some point determined that he would give up any claim he had in this life to wealth, fame, comfort, and family in order to accomplish what he saw as eternal gain. He literally changed the course of his life relinquishing everything he held dear. Even though we may not abandon everything for an austere life as the poustinik, we should still hold the things of this world loosely, yielding them to the Lord in our heart and mind. If we are to change the course of our life, it will be necessary for us to sort out our priorities to make room for our own private, little peaceful *poustinia*. It may be necessary for us to relinquish some things we clutch tightly in order to accommodate new priorities.

Remember Jim Elliott's daring assertion which he backed up with his very life? "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

Is there a place for the Gentle Shepherd in this Nuclear Age? Is there room for Him in our whirlwind existence? Only if we can make room for our own private poustinia in the midst of this world's bustle. Only if we can balance our database by taking time to feed His Word into the computer of our thinking as we memorize the

Holy Scriptures, meditate on them and make them a vital, valid part of our daily lives.

Note: Because the aspects of time and priorities are major dilemmas for many, these concerns are further addressed in Chapter 6.

Catherine de Hueck Doherty, **Poustinia (Madonna House Publications - 1975) pp. 34-35. Used by permission.*



Chapter 2

SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION: A MUST IN THESE LAST DAYS

We have heard much of the “unsinkable” *Titanic*. Its tragic fate screams to posterity of man’s apathy and disregard for caution in the face of danger. Now, as we seem to be speeding toward the end of the age and the ultimate conflict between good and evil, are we similarly choosing to ignore blatant warnings? Are we ready with the Spirit’s Sword in hand, prepared to stand against an enemy bent on our destruction? Or do we lounge in comfortable apathy, like those on the *Titanic*, clinging to a false security of what we want to believe will never change?

In the end, there are two things in this whole world that will endure against the backdrop of eternity — two things that will last forever — the soul of man, and the Word of God. You and I will live forever in the light of our earthly commitment. Only by hiding the eternal utterances of God in our hearts can we maintain focus on eternal worth in a world of accelerating evil and chaos.

Genesis 2:7 tells us:

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. (KJV)

Notice that the Lord God *breathed into his nostrils the breath of life*. The soul of man is God-breathed! And,

All Scripture is God-breathed.... (II Timothy 3:16)

Man's soul and God's Word are on the same wave length. They have the same root source. It is through His Word that God breathes sustaining life into our souls. Scripture is our umbilical cord to our Creator.

Jesus Himself said:

"The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life." (John 6:63)

I am not a Greek scholar, but the back of my concordance says that the word *spirit* here is the Greek word *pneuma* meaning a "current of air" or "breath". So Jesus was saying, "The words that I speak to you, they are *breath* and they are *life*". God's powerful declaration, given to His people through Moses, also echoes to us down through the centuries:

"They are not just idle words for you — they are your life." (Deuteronomy 32:47 - emphasis added)

Our souls must have constant sustenance from our eternal source in order for us to function as spiritual beings. When He was tempted by Satan, Jesus said:

*“Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”
(Matthew 4:4)*

In other words, we must have this world’s bread in order to function physically, but the heavenly bread of God’s holy Word is every bit as vital in order for us to function spiritually.

Physical bread we understand. We know that if we don’t eat regularly and adequately, we’ll be weak and sickly. But do we see a spiritual diet that is infrequent and skimpy as detrimental to our spiritual well-being?

A healthy body lets us know in no uncertain terms when it needs food. But at one time when I went on a fast that got out of control, I found that the body’s natural hunger for food gradually diminishes as we approach starvation until both the desire and capacity for food almost disappear.

Barna Research published statistics indicating that 60 - 80% of all Christians do not even *read their Bibles* for as much as 5 minutes *a week*.

If this is true, then the vast majority of Christians today are starving spiritually. How could it be that the majority of us who profess to love and serve the eternal God would have little or no appetite for His Word and give it such low priority?

Could it be that we have been so busy feeding on the garbage of this world that our appetite for the

meat and potatoes of Scripture has diminished to the starvation level?

What generation in all of history has enjoyed what you and I take for granted? Who has ever had the abundance of Bibles and the variety of translations that fill our shelves? But what have we done with these lavish resources?

We are all given 10,080 minutes every week to invest as we see fit. Of those, we spend approximately 300 to 400 minutes in actual eating time and that's with no allowance for purchasing or preparation. All of this to assure that these physical bodies are adequately nourished. And how much time do we allow for direct *spiritual* nourishment from God's Word? Could it be that most of us spend less than 5 minutes out of 10,080 that make up a week?

Apparently many of us profess to serve a God for whom we have no time. We seem to have no appetite for His communication to us and must believe that we have no need for His input (or maybe interference) in our lives.

Pouring out his most intimate thoughts to the Lord, the psalmist exclaimed:

My soul is consumed with longing for Your laws at all times. (Psalm 119:20)

This should be the natural hunger of God's people for His Word.

A solemn prophecy is recorded in the Book of Amos:

"The days are coming," declares the Sovereign Lord, "when I will send a famine through the land —

not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. Men will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the Word of the Lord, but they will not find it. In that day the lovely young women and strong young men will faint because of thirst.”
(Amos 8:11-13)

This was a sober judgment on people who disregarded the Word of God when they had it. The Lord, in essence, just said, “Okay, if you’re not interested in what I’m saying to you, I’ll no longer give you the option of ignoring it.” And He vowed to remove every trace from their land. Could this be where we are headed?

You and I are living at a very crucial time in history. In recent years we’ve seen Judeo-Christian principles plummet from being the accepted standard of behavior and ethics to the present climate of skepticism, even animosity.

Nero blamed the fire of Rome on Christians in order to create prejudice preparatory to launching his cruel persecutions. Hitler blamed the Jews for misfortunes in Germany preceding the holocaust. It’s interesting that in recent years we have seen so called “Right Wing Extremists” accused by some of everything from the assassination of John Kennedy to the Oklahoma City bombing. And often, it seems an effort is made to also include the Christian Coalition and/or the Moral Majority.

We see the effort more and more to cast Christians as vicious, mean, narrow-minded extremists trying to tell everyone else how to live and “forcing” their beliefs on

others. I think we can look forward to seeing these attitudes becoming increasingly more aggressive.

So, as we see absolutes disappear and moral standards decline to base animal instincts, it's not difficult to anticipate a time, perhaps not far away, when our precious Scriptures could well be viewed as a threat to governmental authority and targeted for confiscation. Whereas a few years ago this would have been unthinkable, today it seems almost imminent. But many Christians still cling to the comfortable assurances we have enjoyed in the past, ignoring ominous clouds that threaten our future. We need to be aware. It was William Buckley who cautioned us, "Little clouds on the horizon grow to be big clouds that engulf us."

Yes, the ill-fated Titanic looms in history as a landmark example of similar apathy and presumption.

The Titanic was the largest and most sumptuous vessel ever put to sea. It carried the world's richest and most famous people. It towered 175 feet into the air, about the equivalent of a 21 story building and was 900 feet long, about 1/6 of a mile. Many considered it unsinkable.

Before the voyage, the Captain, in his delusion of infallibility was quoted as saying, "I can't imagine any condition that would cause this ship to flounder. Modern technology has gotten beyond that." Such misplaced confidence undoubtedly contributed to his doom, his and more than 1500 others.

On the Titanic nothing had been spared in regard to comfort, accommodation, convenience, style and luxury. It was described as a "*floating palace*". The social

atmosphere was said to be “*too good to last*”. The wireless operators were so busy sending and receiving messages for the passengers they didn’t even bother delivering some of the warning messages to the bridge. (Those that did make it were pretty much ignored. After all, the ship was unsinkable, wasn’t it?) The idea of sending the first S.O.S. was regarded as an enormous joke. One historian noted, “*Complacency* was written over the entire story.”

This was the atmosphere that set the stage for what has been called the most tragic shipwreck in history. In hindsight, it seems like a tragedy that by all accounts might have been avoided had there been adequate concern and caution by those in charge. There seem to be a lot of “if only’s” that could have made the difference between life and death for some, if not all, of those who perished in the icy waters of the North Atlantic.

If only the captain had not blindly accepted what was considered to be the status quo and taken the iceberg warnings seriously.

If only the ship had slowed down or stopped for the night instead of increasing speed in order to get through the ice field in a hurry.

If only they hadn’t tried to turn the ship when they spotted the massive iceberg.

If only the *California* had responded to the distress rockets that burst brightly in the night sky. It was less than 20 miles away.

If only there had been adequate life boats. (There were only enough to accommodate about half of those

on board because they were considered merely cosmetic. Everyone “knew” they would never be used.) If only the lifeboats that were only partially filled had made more of an effort to rescue some of the screaming people drowning in the icy waters.

It appears that one of the greatest tragedies of all was that many of the passengers on the Titanic just could not bring themselves to believe that their lavish floating city could ever sink. Even when stewards knocked on doors to alert passengers, there were those who just rolled over in bed convinced that nothing could be seriously wrong. Their faith in the ship was unsinkable, but the object of their faith could not stand the test.

Many chose to cling to the lights, warmth and music of the sinking vessel rather than board life boats and face the unknown of a dark night and freezing waters.

Some lifeboats left with only a handful of people, while many who could have been saved clung to a false security realizing their folly only when it was too late to correct.

Of the 2200+ people on board only 705 were saved in lifeboats that had a capacity for 1178, while more than 1500 perished in the freezing water.

Are the parallels not evident? Do you see many Christians today clinging to a false security even now as rockets erupt on all sides warning us that we are no longer in friendly waters?

Do we find the warmth of Christian fellowship, the spoon feeding of Bible teachers and the seeming security of our sheltered existence too comfortable for us

to stir from our lethargy and take note that our ship is starting to flounder?

Is the *discipline* part of discipleship too distasteful for us to accept?

What about taking God's Word seriously and giving it priority in our lives?

What about facing up to our need for constant spiritual sustenance for survival?

What about memorizing Scripture, not just a verse here and there, but building verses into chapters and chapters into books?

What about facing up to the reality that after all, we are targets of a powerful and aggressive enemy who is bent on our destruction and the destruction of all we hold dear?

What about preparing for spiritual warfare that promises to be more devastating than anything ever before experienced in all of history?

And just where is God's army in all this? Oh, you may not hear these exact words, but in their own way many respond, "Who wants to be bothered? Memorizing Scripture is a drag! It requires discipline. It requires commitment and *time*. Who has the time?" Many actually see this vital part of the Christian life, this joy and enormous privilege, as an intrusion on the sweet apathy that consumes their life.

But there are icebergs ahead!!

Paul told us:

...mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. (II Timothy 3:1)

Nearly every prophesy scholar I know is saying that we will almost surely go into persecution if the Lord tarries.

Speaking about the last days Jesus Himself said:

“Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.” (Matthew 24:12-13)

The love of most will grow cold.... This has to mean that the majority of Christians are going to crumble amidst the advance of evil we can expect in the last days. And if you and I are going to *stand firm*, we need to be sure we’re standing on solid ground, not on a sinking ship.

Have you noticed how many times the word *stand* is used in that powerful passage on spiritual warfare in Ephesians 6?

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes... put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then.... (emphasis added)

How? How are we commanded to prepare for such warfare in order to *stand* against the forces of evil?

Our Lord doesn't just give us a mere suggestion or recommendation on how to prepare. We have here an *order* from our Commander in Chief, the One who is well aware of what is ahead for us. He has told us that if we don't know how to stand we're going to be overrun with the evil that is coming. This is His command to His troops, "***Stand!***"

with the belt of truth buckled around your waist:

Where do we find truth in all this universe, if not in Scripture? Jesus left no room for doubt. Talking with His Father, He said:

"Father... Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth." (John 17:1,17, KJV - *emphasis added*)

with the breastplate of righteousness in place:

What is the secret of living a righteous life? What did Jesus say?

"Father... Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth." (*emphasis added*)

The word *sanctify* here is the Greek word *haglazo* which means "to make holy" or "to purify". Jesus' prayer for you and me was that we would be *purified* and *made holy*. And how was this to be accomplished? Jesus tells us, it is through His Word! Through the precious Word of God.

The cause and effect relevancy between memorizing God's Word, and a righteous life is clearly taught throughout Scripture.

The psalmist said:

I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You. (Psalm 119:11)

Why did he hide God's Word in his heart? He didn't want to sin! He knew the secret of a godly life. It was hiding God's Word in his heart. It was in his heart, not just in a revered book lying on the coffee table.

Speaking about a righteous man, David said:

The law of his God is in his heart; his feet do not slip. (Psalm 37:31)

Why was he able to stand? Why didn't his feet slip? *The law of His God was in his heart.* It wasn't just in a book he carried around with him.

with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace:

Where is it that we learn about the *gospel of peace* and what is our instrument for spreading it if not through the Word of God?

take up the shield of faith:

Where does faith come from?

...faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. (Romans 10:17, NKJV)

take the helmet of salvation:

Again assurance of our eternal salvation lies only in the integrity of our God and in His Word.

and (take) the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God:

To complete our armor and equip us for spiritual combat, the Lord gives us the most powerful weapon available on this earth, *the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God*. It is the only piece of our armor that can be used for offensive as well as for defensive warfare.

How long do you think a soldier of that day would last if he left his sword at home when he went out to face an aggressive enemy?

Yet how many of us go out every day to face an enemy whose sole aim is to steal, kill and destroy, and leave our sword at home on the coffee table? It's only as we *memorize* Scripture that it becomes a sword we have with us to use when we need it. Our enemy doesn't say, "Okay, I'll be launching an attack at 3:15 this afternoon, so you'd better take your Bible." That's not the way he works, is it? He slams us in our weakest point when we least expect it. And if we're not prepared, we'll surely be the victim, not the victor.

Now as never before, as satanic forces launch toward the showdown of the ages, we need to make sure that we have our armor securely in place and our Sword firmly in hand. With new technology and perverted

minds, things could get very ugly very fast. Our Lord has told us that when this happens, most of us are not going to be able to handle it.

The very fact that you're reading this book says that you are aware of the power of Scripture and have a desire to enter more deeply into its truths. *You* were chosen before the creation of the world to live at this particular time in history and to stand for the Lord in this crucial day. You're not reading this now by mere coincidence, but by the design of the One who wants to guide your life. What you do from here will be vital not only for you but for your wife, your husband, your children, your friends, your church, and every life you touch.

We don't know what is ahead, but we do know that we are entering treacherous waters. I challenge you to start storing God's Word, in context, in your heart where no one can ever take it from you. This is a place where it will diffuse into your daily life and give you a solid base on which to stand now and in the days ahead.

Remember, there are two things in this world that will last forever — the soul of man and the Word of God. Again let me say, if you truly want to walk with the Lord and stand against a treacherous enemy now in his last desperate struggle for survival, be sure God's Word is living in your heart as you memorize it and make it a vital part of your life.



Chapter 3

THE BLESSED MAN

A *man after My own heart...* This is how the Lord describes David in Acts 13:22.

How did this happen? Just how was this distinction achieved? These questions have undoubtedly provoked the interest and curiosity of God's people throughout the centuries.

Although we may be convinced that some deep, complex secret is involved, we may need only to examine a simple formula David has very clearly laid out for us in his first Psalm. His description of the *blessed* man in Psalm 1 reveals much about his philosophy of life and gives us a peek into his personal perceptions of how this sweet *affinity* can be realized.

The first verse of this psalm tells us, specifically, what the *blessed* man avoids. The next one defines his agenda. And the third verse elaborates on awesome blessings lavished on those who adopt this lifestyle. Sounds easy doesn't it? Well, here we go....

Blessed is the man....

(Here's what he doesn't do.)

....*who does not* -

walk in the counsel of the wicked

or stand in the way of sinners

or sit in the seat of mockers.

BUT....

(This is his daily agenda.)

....*his delight is in the law of the Lord,*

and on His law he meditates day and night.

(These are the blessings he enjoys.)

He is like a tree....

planted by streams of water,

which yields its fruit in season

and whose leaf does not wither.

Whatever he does prospers.

(Psalm 1:1-3)

Stability and stamina like a tree on a river bank— growth, fruit, prosperity! Good things we all want to tap into. Right? Well, we may all want to grab the prize, but let's not get carried away. In our “quick fix” society, the prerequisites may prove a little more profound than are apparent at first glance.

The Man

It is significant that David wrote this psalm in present tense. *Blessed* (how happy) *is the man* . . . What

man? Any man! Or woman! Anyone who accepts the terms can experience the blessing. It's available to every life, every situation and every generation. It's as relevant to us now as it was in David's day. Generation, age, status, health, wealth, poverty or IQ are not relevant. None of these affect one's ability to enjoy the blessings offered here in Psalm 1.

Undoubtedly volumes could be written analyzing verse 1, but this chapter will focus on the more positive aspects of verses 2 and 3. From verse 1, we point out only that to enjoy *blessed* status there is a life style that must first be shunned. Simply put, we're told that the *blessed man* doesn't fraternize with the ungodly or become enmeshed in their rationale.

That's half the formula. Now comes the good stuff. What *does* he do? Look at verse 2.

*....his delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on His law he meditates day and night.
(emphasis added)*

It's probably easy for us 21st Century Christians to pass this comment off as casually "reading" the Bible, perhaps with a brief time of meditation. It is, indeed, special to read and meditate on Holy Script but how much of it do we retain for consistent meditation with the usual, cursory approach? We're told the *blessed man* "*meditates day and night*". Is it possible to absorb enough solid truth from a casual reading for *day and night* meditation? If you've tried, you know the answer.

To meditate for any length of time, we need ready access to Scripture, in context. Is it conceivable, that the

blessed man of David's day would tote bulky, handwritten scrolls around with him *day and night*, everywhere he went, so he could meditate on them? And what of those long dark hours of the night? Could it mean he spent every wakeful moment poring over his scrolls by flickering lamplight, meditating? Not likely! There seems no question but that the *blessed* man must have amassed a substantial store of Scripture in his heart and mind in order to meditate on it any time of the day or night.

Bible scholars say that it was customary for orthodox Jewish boys to begin memorizing the Torah when they were three years old. By the time they were twelve, they could usually quote the first five books of the Bible from memory. Then they started on the Psalms and Prophets. As a young man, David's repertoire must have been quite significant.

In his younger years, David was a shepherd. He spent long hours, days and probably weeks out in the fields with his sheep. I can relate to this because as a child on the farm I was sometimes asked to "herd the cows". How I hated it! Not yet innovative enough to use the hours wisely, I just sat and fidgeted until it was time to take them home. Minutes seemed like hours. Hours like days. I, for one, couldn't imagine spending a whole day with nothing to do but watch sheep. But *days* and *nights* too? David did it. He spent endless days and nights out in the fields with sheep. That's a lot of time for meditation!

In our accelerated life of stress and frustration, we may have difficulty relating to such a serene existence. Even so, the most important aspect of our day should be the same as his. David's whole concept of life was based on Scripture.

Obviously, there are things that demand our attention and concentration. Psalm 1, however, seems to point out that the formula for blessing doesn't vary. Scripture must become part of us and our daily life. It must be there for us to draw from any and every minute of the day or night. It's not enough to just read it and count on residual retention. We must memorize it! Devour it! Digest it! Meditate on it! So that it becomes part of us. To enter into this blessing, Scripture must be available for constant input and/or output as we face our daily grind.

But the Word of God is more than just spiritual sustenance for the *blessed man*. We're told his *delight is in the law of the Lord*. For the Psalmist, the implication seems to be that he not only *delights* in memorizing and pondering God's Word, he joys in applying its truths to his daily walk. He is fully aware that Scripture's instruction is lovingly provided to help us avoid the pitfalls and heartaches of this life. The enemy strives to portray God's Word as a lackluster, laborious set of rules imposed on us by a dogmatic, judgmental God as sheer drudgery. But as John chooses to emphasize,*His commands are not burdensome*. (I John 5:3) They are the way of life! The way of joy for the blessed man.

The Psalmist, here, reveals an important aspect of memorizing Scripture in context. It should be approached with anticipation, excitement and *delight* in the idea that the great God of the universe wants to communicate his love and instruction to us through the medium of His written Word.

It's interesting that the word used in verse 2 is *delight*, singular. This *delight* is not one of many. It is unique, far exceeding anything else. Meditating on and

obeying the Word of God is the *blessed* man's greatest joy. It's the focus of his desire and the source of his pleasure.

How do we compare with the *blessed* man? Think for a minute. What is it that gives you the greatest pleasure in this world? In your list of *delights*, where does memorizing and meditating on Scripture appear?

Actually, it's not too clear whether the *delight* precedes the memorizing and meditating, or vice versa. I have seen both scenarios enacted in the lives of those who memorize God's Word. Some who dreaded and delayed memorizing a chapter finally began and with just a few verses burst into praise as the Lord touched their lives with blessing. Others have chosen a chapter to memorize because the Lord had already gripped them with its poignant message. So much so, that they craved the constant release of this power and blessing on a consistent basis. Committing the Scripture to memory answered this longing.

It was the truths of Psalm 1 that got me started memorizing by chapter. A longtime admirer of David, I looked for the reason that would cause our Lord to refer to Him in such beloved terms, and I took up the challenge laid out in this psalm.

Other psalmists also spoke about meditating on their beds, so one sleepless night seemed a good time to start. Having memorized many individual verses and short passages of Scripture over the years, I anticipated no problem. But there in the dark, it wasn't all that easy. After the familiar favorites were reviewed, the going got a little slow. Without a catalyst to spark recall, I found myself fumbling around, spending more time trying to remember

The Blessed Man

a verse than I did meditating on it. I also found that verses out of context weren't the material that *prolonged* meditation was made of.

It became obvious, very fast, that meditation, the day and night kind, needed more substance than just random verses. I had to conclude that only memorizing in context, by chapter, provided enough material for serious meditation.

I began committing chapters to memory, small portions at a time, and reflecting on them throughout the day. Meditating became a natural part of my day. My favorite times to review and meditate were and still are in the early morning hours and before going to sleep. For the first time, I enjoyed special delight in the Word of God that had escaped me for some fifty years of just *reading* my Bible.

Verse 2 depicts a strong link between *meditating* and *delighting* in God's Word. It seems that serious memorization of Scripture is the stuff meditation is made of. And in most cases it does appear that it is meditation that ignites genuine *delight* in the powerful Word. It's obvious that the quick and easy approach so many people look for is not inherent in this psalm.

The Tree

Verse 3 tells us that the *blessed* man is like a tree, a symbol of growth and life. This tree is planted by a stream, assuring constant access to life-giving waters. It doesn't live a sporadic life, deluged with moisture one minute, wilting from thirst the next. Its lifeline is secure, abundant and continuous. Meditation and

delight in memorized Scripture provides this continuous nurturing for the *blessed* man.

We're told that this is a fruit tree. But fruit doesn't instantly appear even on this unique tree. It is a natural part of the growth process. Fruit is yielded *in its season*. In this day of instant "fixes", we want to see results right now. Eureka! Fruit! This psalm seems to emphasize that God's fruit comes with consistency over a period of time, not overnight. Not by infrequent gulps from a tentative source, but by burrowing deep roots into an abundant water supply.

The idea of consistency is perpetuated in that, unlike other fruit trees, this one is *ever-green*. Its *leaf does not wither*. Whereas fruit comes *in season*, the evidence of life and growth are always present.

Jeremiah also compares the *blessed* man to a flourishing tree. Speaking about this, he says:

It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. (Jeremiah 17:8)

"Turning up the heat" is an interesting cliché. This tree isn't threatened by the *heat* of external circumstances. Even though the world around swelters, its leaves remain lush and green because its roots are well grounded in an all-sufficient source.

Obviously an impressive sight, this tree is like others of its ilk: stable, reliable, predictable, always in its place, unwavering, trustworthy. Such trees traditionally served as landmarks, providing direction for wayfarers.

So then this stalwart specimen of Psalm 1 doesn't exist only to be admired for its strength and beauty. It is a

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many-faceted blessing to all those whose life it touches. Its strong, sprawling branches are extended for shelter. As a landmark, it offers direction for the wanderer. It provides shade for the weary, refreshing fruit for the pilgrim. Hm! Is this an allegory of what you'd like to see in your life?

The Ultimate

Whatever he does prospers. Wow! What a promise! We didn't miss that with a quick reading, did we? According to the first part of verse 3, the one who memorizes Scripture, who meditates and delights in the Word, is like a flourishing tree. This in itself is an impressive promise. But in addition, we're told unequivocally, *Whatever he does prospers.* Another awesome promise! Perhaps even more so than is evident at first glance.

Because our American society is one of the most affluent in the world, there is a great temptation for us to be lured into its materialistic concept of prosperity. We may see it fulfilled in such things as "money, mansions and worldly gain". Perhaps this *is* what is meant in this passage, but the eternal aspect of wealth is undoubtedly of greater interest to the *blessed* man.

Christians coming to this country from areas of persecution say that it's much more difficult to live a committed Christian life in the prosperity of the United States and Canada than it was under persecution. Whereas we were praying for Russian Christians, especially during their years of oppression, a friend of mine returning from there said Christians in Russia were praying for us because they feared our fixation on affluence was turning our hearts

away from the Lord. If their fears were justified, then there could be a vast difference between our concept of *affluence* and the *prosperity* referred to in this psalm. Scripture reminds us:

...what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. (II Corinthians 4:18)

The Lord admonishes us:

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. (Colossians 3:2)

Phillips translates this same text:

Give your heart to the heavenly things, not to the passing things of earth.

Perhaps we should not be too quick to accept our own version of “prosperity”. *Eternal prosperity* will surely be more wonderful than anything we could ever imagine. Remember:

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.

(I Corinthians 2:9, KJV)

Whatever he does prospers. Do you long to know God’s prosperity in *whatever* you do? The promise is sure. The conditions are clearly explained, memorize, meditate and delight in the Holy Word of our Almighty God.

Blessed Commitment

The concept of this psalm is most profound. The depth of devotion described delves almost beyond the comprehension of the average Christian in our culture. Constant meditation and delight in Scripture characterize the *blessed* man of verse 2. This consistent life is further illustrated by the *steadfast* tree deeply rooted in an abundant water source depicted in verse 3. Surely this was David's secret, a life securely anchored in divine truth resulting in a consistent, intense, enduring relationship with his God, *a man after God's own heart*. We often interpret this as God's heart reaction to one intent on His purpose, but it may also be seen as David's seeking after the heart of God.

We are frequently admonished: "Be sure to read your Bible in the morning and start your day off right." This often gives us a sense of accomplishment. We have read our little passage. We have started our day right and our duty is done. But what about the remaining hours? How much of what we read in the morning continues with us throughout the day? An idea? A perception? A phrase? Clearly, this casual approach does not meet the criteria described by David in this psalm. Perhaps it's time for all of us to re-evaluate our *priorities* and *delights*.

How does our own personal approach to Scripture compare with that of the *blessed* man of Psalm 1? Can we be honest with ourselves and with our Lord about the depth of our commitment? Where do we place our priorities, and where do we find our greatest delight? Are we really serious about a closer walk with God? Serious

enough to exercise the needed discipline? Enough to begin memorizing Scripture *in context* to fill our hearts and minds with the Living Water of God's Word?

The depth of David's commitment to the Lord cries out in his bold assertion:

I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart. (Psalm 40:8 KJV)

David memorized, meditated and delighted in God's Holy Word. David was a man after God's own heart.



Chapter 4

THE BIG *If*

Ask whatever you wish and it will be given you. Wow! Is that a promise or is that a promise? Is this the prayer life we experience? If not, why not? Perhaps if we look closely at the context in John 15:7, we may find the answer.

*If you remain in Me
and (if) My words remain in you,
ask whatever you wish,
and it will be given you.*

Yes, this is the amazing promise Jesus gave to His disciples. Its ramifications are mind boggling. Perhaps this is why it's so tempting for us to move quickly to the promise, giving little thought as to how it is accomplished. It's easy to leap to the conclusion without taking time to arrive, isn't it? But before we can experience the reality of this powerful promise, there seem to be conditions that must be addressed.

It's important for us to realize that the Lord had only precious moments left to spend with His disciples.

The Sword

His agonizing death loomed only hours away as He here extends this profound and loving proposal to His disciples. It is one of the most beautiful in His legacy to mortal men. He knows well that such potential cannot be offered without built-in protection, lest it work to their detriment rather than blessing.

The Terms

The provisions of this agreement are explicit. Our Lord leaves no room for conjecture. He takes off from the very first word:

If....

The dictionary says *if* means “on the condition”. We are immediately alerted that something is involved here which does not happen automatically. Conditions must be met. *If* they are met, then the conclusion is predictable. *If* not, then whatever follows does not apply.

So what are the conditions and who is responsible for meeting them? We learn the *who* in a fast hurry:

you....

If- you....! This is an open contract. It’s available to anyone who will rise to the challenge. When *you* read it *you* have a decision to make. Will *you* accept the challenge or pass it by? The promise is there, *if you* want to take advantage of it. But *if you* choose to ignore it, you can just continue on your way. Remember, though, *if you* don’t fulfill your part of the bargain, don’t expect to claim the desired end.

Not all of God's gifts to us come in contract form, that is, with conditions attached. Some happen no matter what. Nothing we do or don't do makes the sun come up in the east and go down in the west each day.

God's *love* is unconditional. We do nothing to earn it, nor can we suppress it. The shepherd loves the rebellious little lamb that spends all its time in the furthest corner of the pasture every bit as much as the one tagging along at his heels, but he's able to show his love more to the one who stays close. Such is God's unconditional love for us.

By contrast, John 15:7 addresses very definite conditions which cannot be ignored and for very good reasons. Would you give your child an unexploded land mine to play with as a toy? Even so, the Lord could not turn this powerful promise loose on people who are not prepared nor informed about its use.

"Okay", you say, "how do I fulfill my end?" The first thing we are told is to....

remain....

The word *remain* is the Greek word *meno*, meaning to stay (in a given place, state, relation or expectancy) to abide, continue, dwell, endure, be present, remain, stand"

Obviously, to *remain* is to stay put in one place, the way you sometimes expect your kids to wait for you at the mall. *Remaining* is not flitting hither and yon. It's not an on/off, erratic arrangement. To *remain* in this instance is a solid commitment. A consistent relationship. A fixed residence, if you will. One who *remains* can always be found in the specified place.

Now, if you were to pick a place where you would be staying continuously, what kind of an environment would you choose? How about somewhere that is safe, and bright, and comfortable, and happy, and peaceful, and loving, and.... (you fill in the rest). Wherever could such a place be found? Jesus says....

in Me....

“*If - you - remain - in Me....*”. But then what exactly does this mean, to *remain - in* Jesus? In the context of John 15, this status is illustrated by the allegory of a branch’s relationship to the vine.

In order for a branch to survive and bear fruit, it must be attached to the vine. Life-giving nourishment surges up from the roots of the vine through the stem to the branch. Thus the branch shares the life of the vine. If, however, the branch is separated from the vine, the life-flow is severed and the branch is left to shrivel and die. In other words, as long as the branch *remains in* the vine, it flourishes and bears fruit. Should this relationship cease to exist, so also does the life of the branch.

Jesus said that He is the vine and we are the branches. As a branch remains *in* the vine, we must *remain in* Him in a constant, abiding relationship. Thus, as His life flows through us, we grow in Him and bear fruit.

This, then, is the first condition of the contract. We are to *remain in* Jesus. The Amplified Bible says we must *abide vitally united to*. In fulfilling this condition, we participate in the Everlasting Covenant with our Lord and Savior. We are one with Him, sharing His life, growing through His strength, bearing His fruit. Total commitment!

But this is only the first condition of the contract. There is another factor to be considered. Thus, the next word:

and....

This tells us that a parallel condition is about to be addressed. The first stipulation is a vital part of the contract, but the second is of no less significance.

(if)....

Although *if* is not stated as part of this second provision, it is nonetheless implied and understood. Thus, there is another decision that must be made which is equally important but separate and apart from the first. Again, you have the option to pursue it or ignore it, as you choose. Again, to claim the promise is to accept the terms, both of them.

The first condition mentioned by Jesus requires that we *remain in* Him. This may be construed as a somewhat passive role to just “stay put” *in* Him. The second specification, however, requires a more active role, that of taking hold of something and making it a vital part of our life.

and (if) My Words remain in you....

Our Lord Jesus here makes explicit reference to specific, literal text. “*My words*”, says Jesus. If “*My Words remain in you....*” It might be easy for Christians today to assume that this can be accomplished by just

reading the Bible. But could this second stipulation be met by mere reading?

Of course it can't be denied that reading the Word is an essential part of the Christian life. But could it be said that the actual *words* of Scripture *remain in* one's heart and mind as a permanent resource with merely a reading or even a study of the Word? Some people with photographic memories grasp precise wording readily, but most of us retain very little of literal text from just reading. Consequently, what we retain may be mostly our own impressions of what we think Scripture is saying or someone else's interpretation of it. Jesus doesn't refer to *our interpretation* of His Word, or *our opinion* about what we've read. The stipulation made by Him is well defined, leaving no leeway for the insertion of our own ideas. According to this verse, in order for us to comply with the terms of this contract, we must have a literal grasp of truth.

In other chapters we have discussed the difference between *reading* the Word and *memorizing* it. Only by memorization can the *words* of Scripture in context be transferred from the page of the Book into our hearts, minds and souls where it can *remain in* us. Not *with* us as we might carry our Bible *with* us, but *in* us, a viable part of our life. Only by memorizing verbatim can we fulfill this second condition of the contract.

There is another aspect of truth yet to be considered which profoundly affects this entire scenario.

The Written Word and the Living Word

It is important for us to realize that the One here talking about the *written* Word is Himself the *living* Word. The written Word is God's partial revelation to us through the Scriptures, but we are told that full revelation came through His Son.

*God, who gave to our forefathers many different glimpses of the truth in the words of the prophets, has now, at the end of the present age, given us the truth in the Son. (Hebrews 1:1-2)**

So the Word became human and lived here on earth among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen His glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father. (John 1:14, NLT)

Those in the Old Testament had only the *written* Word and the promise of the *living* Word who would be revealed to them at a future time. We have the *written* Word, but we can also personally know the *living* Word, the One who is Himself the personification of the *written* Word, our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One who humbly offers this gracious proposal to any who will accept it.

“...if you will live your life in Me...” (says Jesus).*

We can almost hear Him saying, “*if - **only** - you will live your life in Me...*” But why would our Lord make this emphasis?

As we travel down the “Life Road” we have a handbook, the Bible. This book tells us about the way of joy and victory. It spells out the importance of the do’s and don’t’s, the why’s and the wherefore’s. It warns that we have a fierce adversary and that there are dangerous pitfalls. In the end, though, we find it is futile for us to have all this information because it’s far beyond our human capabilities to live this life we read about. If the story ended there, it would be a sad one indeed.

Praise God, our Guide Book also tells us about One who not only paid the price for all of our sins and failures, He is our boundless source of strength and power to live according to the *Book*. He fulfilled everything written in the Scriptures. He brought the *Words* to life. He *is* the *Word of God* personified. He trod the road of humanity, tempted and buffeted, as we, but without deviation. He emerged victorious over life’s trials and temptations. Because of Him we too can walk the way of life and love. But only as we *remain in* Him can this be accomplished.

So, the two conditions are irrevocably linked. We can live the life of the *written* Word only in the power and strength of the *living* Word. But there is a reverse that is also true. Whereas the *written* Word cannot function in our lives apart from the *living* Word, Jesus makes it plain that our relationship with Him, the *living* Word, does not exist independent of the *written* Word.

“...*if you live your life in Me,*” (says Jesus)
“*and* (if) *My words live in your hearts....*”*

So, for us to be united with Jesus as a branch is one with the vine, and to long for His will to be fulfilled in our lives is half the contract. But equally important is having the written Word living in our hearts so that we have a clear understanding of what His will is for us. We must memorize it so its meaning is not diluted. Thus, there is no confusing our own thoughts and ideas with the text. God's holy, infallible Word must *live in* our hearts.

Consequently, if we live our life in Jesus, the living Word (we have a personal, vital relationship with Him) *and* if we have the written Word living in our hearts (we know God's will as it is revealed to us in His Word so we can actually pray His Word back to Him) then our will is one with our Lord's.

Then and only then are we ready to receive the promise, the consummation of the contract: "*...you can ask for whatever you like and it will come true for you.*"*

"...if you live your life in Me," (says Jesus)*

...you are one with Him. His life and power are flowing through you in consistent fellowship.

*"...and (if) My words live in your hearts..."**

...you are memorizing His Word so that it is a permanent part of your existence. You know God's unadulterated will for you, according to His Word, and long for it to be fulfilled in your life.

*"...you can ask for whatever you like, and it will come true for you."**

...then ask to you heart's content. Your requests will be granted.

Fruit

Lest there be any question as to why this beautiful promise is extended to us mortals, Jesus adds:

*“This is to My Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples.”
(John 15:8)*

The whole purpose of our life and prayers is that the Father be glorified and that we bear *fruit* for His glory.

Fruit! What is *fruit*? Some contend that *fruit* in the New Testament means those we have won to the Lord. This may be true, but there are specific verses that refer to *fruit* as it relates to traits of character evident in the life of a mature Christian:

*Romans 6:22 But now that you are employed by God, you owe no duty to sin, and you reap the fruit of being made righteous, while at the end of the road there is life for evermore.**

*Galatians 5:22 The Spirit... produces in human life fruits such as these: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, fidelity, tolerance and self-control....**

Ephesians 5:8-9 Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord.

Hebrews 12:11 Now obviously no “chastening” seems pleasant at the time: it is in fact most unpleasant.

*Yet when it is all over we can see that it has quietly produced the fruit of real goodness in the characters of those who have accepted it in the right spirit.**

We often think that those bringing glory to our heavenly Father and *bearing fruit* for Him are highly talented figures much in the public eye. Our generation has a tendency to put great emphasis on *working for the Lord* and the significant accomplishments of those who receive the raves. In fact, it seems some of us may be so busy doing the Lord's work we have little time for Him. I have lived in this trap.

The Lord, however, expresses much more interest in what we *are*, our quiet relationship with Him, rather than a great flourish that may draw accolades from others. He may or may not be glorified with flashy public displays of abilities; but He longs to see quiet fruit demonstrated in our lives. This, He says, will bring glory to the Father.

We were created for the Lord's pleasure. How exactly do we give Him pleasure? Jesus said: "*This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit...*" The branch doesn't work to create fruit; fruit is an automatic product of the branch's relationship with the vine. As the vine provides the nourishment, the branch bears fruit. All the branch does is to *stay put*. The vine does the rest. And the Father is glorified.

It's another deception of our great adversary that keeps us focused on activity rather than on the quiet fruit of righteousness borne for our Lord's glory and for His glory alone. Jesus does not address the "doers" in these verses nor does He single out specific persons or types of

personalities. His invitation is open to anyone and everyone who is willing to accept the challenge and follow it through to fulfillment.

Our Lord at this moment, has His hand out to *you*, very humbly offering this promise to *you*. This is not a command. He merely extends the invitation: “*If (only) you*” will accept the conditions, then... “*you can ask for whatever you like and it will come true for you.*”^{*} Not to fulfill selfish desires; not to accommodate human reasoning, but that you in your own little, personal world may *bear much fruit* for the *Father’s glory*.

This is a private, personal decision, between you and your Lord. Hebrews 12:11 speaks about the fruit of real goodness being *quietly* produced. The fruit borne in your life is not for public display. It’s not for the benefit of other people who are not directly affected. No one else may even know about it. (Only as the Father, Himself, may choose to use you to touch the lives of others.) It is between you and your Father. It is for *His* glory. It is your offering of love to the Father.

Who you are, or what you have been in the past makes no difference. *If* you abide by the terms, the promise is yours and the Father will be glorified.

After writing this chapter, I ran across Andrew Murray’s very eloquent comments which speak profoundly of this passage:

“If ye abide in me, and *my words abide in you*, ask whatsoever ye will, it shall be done unto you.” We see what this means. In the words the

Savior gives Himself. We must have the words *in us*, taken up into our will and life, reproduced in our disposition and conduct. We must have them *abiding* in us: our whole life one continued exposition of the words that are within, and filling us; the words revealing Christ within, and our life revealing Him without. It is as the words of Christ enter our very heart, become our life and influence it, that our words will enter His heart and influence Him. My prayer will depend on my life; what God's words are to me and in me, my words will be to God and in God. If I do what God says, God will do what I say.

"If my words abide in you:" the condition is simple and clear. In His words His will is revealed. As the words abide in me, His will rules me; my will becomes the empty vessel which His will fills, the willing instrument which His will wields; He fills my inner being. In the exercise of obedience and faith my will becomes ever stronger, and is brought into deeper inner harmony with Him. He can fully trust it to will nothing but what He wills; He is not afraid to give the promise, "If My words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, it shall be done unto you." To all who believe it, and act upon it, He will make it literally true.

His prayer:

Blessed Lord! Thy lesson this day has again discovered to me my folly. I see how it is that my

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prayer has not been more believing and prevailing. I was more occupied with my speaking to Thee than Thy speaking to me. I did not understand that the secret of faith is this: there can be only so much faith as there is of the Living Word dwelling in the soul.

And Thy word had taught me so clearly: Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak; let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God. Lord, teach me that it is only with Thy word taken up into my life that my words can be taken into Thy heart; that Thy word, if it be a living power within me, will be a living power with Thee; what Thy mouth hath spoken Thy hand will perform. **

*If you live your life in Me
and (if) My words live in your hearts,
you can ask for whatever you like
and it will come true for you.*

*This is how My Father will be glorified —
in your becoming fruitful
and being My disciples.**

* *Phillips translation*

** *Andrew Murray, With Christ In The School Of Prayer (From Lesson 22)*



Chapter 5

REVIVAL FIRE

*“Is not My Word like fire,”
declares the Lord....
(Jeremiah 23:29)*

You and I have lived through a marvelous day of undisturbed security and unlimited freedoms. Today, we teeter on the edge of the unknown as never before.

We are seeing men of unscrupulous evil assuming positions of authority and influence.

For the first time in all of history, man has the ability to totally destroy life as we know it.

We see genetic engineering developing with grotesque and unspeakable evil experimentation and potential.

We see sexual perversion promoted as a *perfectly acceptable* “alternative life style”.

And *more than 4,000* precious, helpless, little, unborn babies are being ruthlessly slaughtered every day in these United States with no one to hear their

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silent screams. (38,000,000 since the Roe vs. Wade decision in 1973, through 1998.*)

If our Lord tarries, it would seem that we are about to see the Christian church thrust into an arena that will surely be more satanic, more aggressive, more vicious than has ever been experienced by any other generation.

But it is as the world grows darker and more evil that we, God's light on this planet, have the potential to shine ever more brightly. A light that may go unnoticed during the day becomes a virtual beacon in the black hours of the night.

The Spirit and The Sword

In Matthew 25:1-13 our Lord referred to wise virgins who made sure their lamps were filled with oil so their flames burned brightly in the darkness and to foolish virgins who let their lamps run dry, so their presence merely contributed to the darkness around them. As the night darkens around us in these last days, are we, like the wise virgins, ready with our lamps filled with oil and burning brightly, or is our flame merely a flicker in the wind?

It is evident from this illustration that fire was dependent on a supply of oil. Where there was no oil, there was no fire. In Scripture, oil is a picture of the Holy Spirit. When He descended at Pentecost, we're told:

...what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit.... (Acts 2:3-4, NLT)

The room must have been lit with a holy glow, like a room full of living lamps as they sat there with *what looked like flames or tongues of fire* resting on each one, not unlike the wise virgins with their lamps in hand.

It's interesting that in this passage the Lord is careful to emphasize the *individuality* of the believer. Even though they were *all together in one place* (Acts 2:1) and were *with one accord in prayer...* (Acts 1:14, KJV), the Holy Spirit did not just deal with them in a collective manner. Notice*what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them* (NLT). The New International Version says *what seemed like tongues of fire... separated and came to rest on each of them*. It wasn't just one big flame that descended on the assembly as a whole. The Holy Spirit came to each one personally. And individuality is again emphasized in verse 4: *everyone* (every one) *present was filled with the Holy Spirit...*

Of course, it's important for us as God's family to meet and worship together to help, exhort, and encourage each other. The writer of Hebrews emphasizes this:

Let us not give up meeting together... but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:25)

Even so, when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, we have a gentle reminder that whereas we are all members of one body, we are also individuals who are responsible to the Lord for keeping our own personal lamp trimmed, filled with oil and burning brightly, not depending on the sanctity of others to carry us along.

Jeremiah reveals another interesting aspect of God's *holy fire*, this time associated with His Word.

*"Is not My word like fire," declares the Lord....
(Jeremiah 23:29 - emphasis added)*

And in Jeremiah 20:9 the prophet asserts:

*...His Word burns in my heart like a fire. It's like a
fire in my bones! (NLT - emphasis added)*

In Acts 2:3 we're told that the Holy Spirit came with flames or tongues *like fire* and in Jeremiah we're told God's Word is *like fire*. Can we conclude then that we should look to the Word of God, *like fire*, to brighten the flame of the Holy Spirit in our lives?

To pursue this thought even further, we have the reference in Ephesians that binds the performance of the Holy Spirit in our lives with the Word of God. We're told that the Spirit's Sword, the weapon He has given us for spiritual warfare, *is the Word of God. The Sword of the Spirit is the Word of God.* And each Christian is *commanded to take it.* This is an emphatic command.

Considering the apparent bond between God's Holy Spirit and His Holy Word, there must be a firm link between this command to *take the Sword of the Spirit* and the Holy Spirit's ability to function effectively in our lives. So what does it mean to actually *take the Sword of the Spirit*?

Perhaps you're thinking, as many do, "Oh, that means we should be sure to read our Bible every day without fail." Would you think for just a moment about the last time you read your Bible? What specifically do

you recall of the passage you read? Have you found that with just a simple reading, or even a study, that you have adequate fuel to keep the fire of the Word burning brightly in your heart and life throughout the day and into the night?

Somewhere along the line we've picked up the idea that *taking the Sword of the Spirit* has to do with the ownership or maybe access to a *book*. I'm sure you've been in meetings where someone has asked, "How many of you have your sword in hand?" Then everyone holds up his Bible and proudly waves it in the air.

But let me ask you: Is that Book, that bundle of paper, your Sword? Praise God, His Word is printed on the pages of that book, but of what value is this to us if the powerful Word printed on its pages is not stored in our hearts to burn with purifying fire? Only then do we have constant access to it for the Holy Spirit to use on our behalf when we are out there on the front lines of life.

Does *owning* a Bible or carrying one around with us and referring to it every now and again imply its profound potential? Surely, it's only as we memorize this powerful Word that it becomes a flame and a Sword in our life.

A Pampered People

Jesus said:

Much is required from those to whom much is given, and much more is required from those to whom much more is given. (Luke 12:48, NLT)

What generation in all of history has enjoyed what has been lavished on us? Most of us own at least one copy of *God's Sword*, maybe two or three, or even more.

Who has ever had the abundance of Bibles and reference books; the spoon feeding of amplified truth that we Christians have fed into our lives on a daily basis; the tapes and literature available on every imaginable aspect of the Christian life; Christian radio and television 24 hours a day; unlimited access to endless resources from all over the globe on the worldwide web?

We have sermons, Bible studies, conferences, retreats and seminars taught by pastors, teachers, and counsellors and the list goes on. We have Scripture-related plaques, calendars, clocks, stationery, diaries, cookbooks, bookmarks, even bumper stickers and billboards, every imaginable reminder to decorate our lives.

Yet with all of this, how would you say we measure up to the Christian Church of past generations? With the early church, for example, who, because of their faith, faced lions and gladiators in the colosseum? People, like you and I, were drenched with oil and burned as torches to light the entrance of Caesar's parties. How would we react if we faced such a challenge or had to watch while our loved ones were so treated?

Or what about the spiritual giants of the 18th and 19th centuries who forsook comfort and convenience to give their lives out in the front lines of faith: John and Charles Wesley, Dwight L. Moody, Charles Finney, George Whitfield, Jonathan Goforth, Charles Spurgeon, Andrew Murray, William Carey, Hudson Taylor, David Brainard, George Mueller, Jonathan Edwards, "Praying"

Hyde, and many others. These were men who willingly *risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.* (*Acts 15:26 NLT*)

Could it be that all of our Bibles and spiritual luxuries, instead of strengthening us, have lulled us into a dangerous mind set of false security and sluggish apathy? Have we as individuals contributed our identity to a sea of mediocrity?

One Man

There was a man who lived in the 15th Century whose self-sacrifice and commitment to God stands out in history as an example of the impact that can be made by just *one* person. This one man probably did more to spark the reformation than any other human being. You may never even have heard his name. It was Giralomo Savonarola.

He was a monk who lived in Florence, Italy from 1452 to 1498. Desperate to see the Lord send a revival, he entered a monastery at age 22 to begin a life of prayer, fasting and seeking the Lord through memorizing His Word. He was *one man* who lived in a world filled with vice, immorality and corruption, such as we can hardly imagine. “What influence could *one* person have on such a society?” you might ask. What, indeed?

The impact of his life and commitment not only transformed the city of Florence, it resounded throughout all of Europe and eventually throughout the world, even to subsequent generations. Perhaps, if you and I could trace back our spiritual lineage, we would find this selfless man in our family tree.

We're told that there were times when Savonarola sat behind the pulpit that his face seemed to be illuminated with a heavenly glow. Such crowds came to hear him that the smaller churches couldn't hold them, and they had to use the large cathedral in Florence. People stood in line throughout the night waiting for the doors to open.

The revival that broke out as a result of his ministry resulted in tremendous moral change. The corrupt city government of Florence was overthrown, and he taught the people how to set up a democratic form of government. People stopped reading vile, worldly books. Merchants made restitution for the excessive profits they had been making. Hoodlums and street urchins stopped singing vulgar songs and began singing hymns in the streets. Huge bonfires were made of lewd books, obscene pictures, and worldly objects. Children marched from house to house in procession, singing hymns, and calling on everyone to repent.

Savonarola said that God had told him he would have only eight years to proclaim His message. And what happened at the end of eight years? He was brutally tortured by the church hierarchy who tried unsuccessfully to make him recant his stand. When he refused, "he was hanged and burned in the great square in Florence".*** His last words were, "Should I not die willingly for Him who suffered so much for me?"***

During this time, there was a young boy growing up in Germany who was greatly influenced by the life, ministry, and death of Savonarola. His name was Martin Luther.

If God could use just *one* such man living in an insignificant corner of the globe to bring a mighty revival in one of history's darkest hours, what could He accomplish through us, through you and me, if only *we* are willing to pay the price. Only God knows what could be accomplished. But are we willing to prepare the way with prayer as Savonarola did? Will we feed on God's Word by committing large portions of it to memory as he did?

In Ezekiel's time the Lord said:

"I looked for a man... who would... stand before Me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none." (Ezekiel 22:30)

As the Lord searches the hearts of His people today will He find *one* who is willing to utterly pay the price? Are you that person? Am I?

A pastor once commented in a sermon, "The world has yet to see what God can do through *one man* wholly yielded to Himself." A young man sitting in the audience vowed, "By God's grace, I'll be that man!" What is our heart's response to such a challenge?

Personal Revival

In that great revival verse, II Chronicles 7:14, the Lord says:

"...if (another big "if") My people, who are called by My name...."

People is a collective word. A group of *people* is made up of individuals. His *people* are you and me. As you've heard so often, the Lord isn't talking to "publicans and sinners" out there somewhere, but to His very own children — His family, *people... called by (His) name*. Neither is He addressing the masses as in mob rule. He's addressing *individuals* who together make up His precious family and His army. He says to us, to you and to me:

"...if(you)... *will* (then He names four things)
humble (yourselves)
and pray
and seek My face,
and turn from (your) *wicked ways,*
"then," (says the Lord) "*will I*
hear from heaven
and will forgive (your) *sin*
and will heal (your) *land.*" (*emphasis added*)

Many Bible teachers use this verse as a call to prayer for revival and well they should. But they often seem to present *prayer* as being the sole criteria on which this promise rests. *Prayer* is specifically stated as one of *four* conditions, but it is *only one*. Another catalyst may be more inclusive.

We have some understanding of what it is to *humble* ourselves, to *pray* and to *turn from sin*, but what exactly is meant by *seeking God's face*? According to *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, seeking the *face* of God, is "seeking His presence". Other than through prayer, how else can we pursue this in our lives? Savonarola apparently knew. It is through memorizing the *living Word of the living God* that

we *seek His face* and touch the very character of God. Savonarola not only prayed unceasingly for revival, the fire of God's Word burned brightly in His life as he ardently memorized large portions of Scripture and walked in its light, in life and in death.

Many of us have experienced intimate, personal revival as we have committed to memorizing Scripture in context. God's Word burns in our hearts and minds as all four factors mentioned in this verse are *amplified* and *intensified* in a way that was not otherwise realized.

We have found, as I'm sure also did Savonarola, that as we *seek the face of the Lord* in His Word, we experience a new and exciting awareness of His divine presence, His incomprehensible grace, and His awesome power.

Our *prayer life* takes on new dimensions as we experience Him intimately in His glory and majesty.

We are *humbled* as He graciously draws us to Himself, while *revealing our sin* and weaknesses, gently guiding us into a better way through the power of His Word. When we *read* our Bible, the Holy Spirit may vie for our attention as we pass lightly over a point of conviction. But when we *memorize* it, the Scripture is etched on our mind and soul. As we review and meditate on it, *we become increasingly aware of our sin* and His holiness in a profound and compassionate way. One young Christian and avid memorizer said:

I felt the Lord wanted me to start by memorizing the book of Obadiah. Then as His Words of condemnation for Edom sank deep into my soul, He uncovered my own prideful spirit. It has been a humbling and purifying process. I consider the

great privilege I have of memorizing God's very Words, to be the greatest gift He could have given me. It has changed my life!

From a young wife and mother:

The Lord used a *Sword of the Spirit* presentation at our church to inspire our family to begin memorizing the book of James. We have completed the first chapter and are excited about beginning the second. (Ed: They have since completed the entire book.)

It is wonderful to be able to meditate on a piece of Scripture. I don't think any of us really understood what that meant until we began memorizing James. I can't tell you how many times the Lord has brought to mind a verse that is just right for a certain situation and led me to dwell on the specific verse. It is not always what I want to hear, but it is always what I need to hear.

Memorizing large portions of Scripture has given us a context for the verses we memorize. It has given us a direction as a family and has taught us so much about the way the Lord would have us live our lives. The direction we need is with us when we need it.

It is memorizing chapters and books that lets our soul drink from the full context of the Word. Then we can fellowship with our Lord in ways that are not possible through any other means.

Some of us have known the Lord for years, but *the most profound movement of the Holy Spirit* in our lives has not come from sermons, or Bible Studies, or even from prayer without the power of the Word behind it. It has been the pure application of the holy Word of God to our hearts and minds as we memorized it in context and applied its truths to our lives.

In the words of one born to missionary parents and converted as a young child who is now a grandmother:

When I attended a *Sword of the Spirit* workshop and heard the book of Philippians quoted from memory, I wept the entire time because of the power of the Word. I went home resolved to memorize for myself. Although learning John 14 was a real struggle, I found it to be a life changing experience. The Word came alive in my heart and life. Even though I had been a Christian since early childhood, I discovered a new dimension to my Christian experience that was completely unknown to me. Even the deep, intensive nature of inductive Bible study (with two hours of homework each night) didn't compare with the power of the Word written on my heart as I memorized it and came to experience more of the very heart of my God.

I personally had been a Christian for 50 years, but it was not until I began memorizing chapters and books of Scripture that the Holy Spirit really had opportunity

to work in my heart, and I started to experience a meaningful walk with the Lord. Through memorizing, God's Word was branded on my mind and soul. It became *part of me*. It permeated my thinking, my prayer life, and my daily walk. I could no longer skim over convicting passages and quickly forget them. Even in reading, the Word now reveals a depth of meaning and "tangibility" that was not present before. Heaven and eternity with my Lord has become an awesome reality rather than just a fuzzy hope out there somewhere in the future.

Of course, reading and studying Scripture is a vital part of our Christian life and growth, but only when we memorize it *in its context* does it become a Sword in hand, a glowing fire in our life, and a source of constant joy that wells up from within.

Do you remember the old fashioned pump? As long as we pumped the handle up and down, water poured out the spout from the depths of the well, but when we stopped pumping, the flow of water stopped. This is kind of like *reading* Scripture. As long as we read it, we have it to drink in. When we stop, there's a residual benefit but there is no flow. When we *memorize* it, it's like an artesian well. There's a constant issue from within. The Fountain of Living Water is always there to drink from to nourish and sustain.

Revival = Desire + Diligence

Let me ask you: Is your soul thirsty for revival? In your life? In your church? In this country? I mean *really thirsty*?

“♪ ...my heart’s one desire is to be holy...♪” are words incorporated in a popular chorus. It’s a beautiful chorus and I know that singing it makes everyone feel pious because it does sound very spiritual. But this chorus always bothers me because it seems to imply that holiness and revival are the effortless products of *desire*; that *desire* is almost an end in itself.

Solomon cautioned us about this:

The soul of a sluggard desires, and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich. (Proverbs 13:4, NKJV)

Although not specifically stated, the inference seems to be that *desire* alone is a non-entity. It is only as *desire* inspires *diligence*, that it is productive. For example, fruit doesn’t suddenly appear out of nowhere just because you crave a juicy morsel. Mere *desire* doesn’t produce fruit - ker plop - there it is, ripe and ready for the eating. Desire merely serves to stimulate action. Your longing for the finished product may inspire you to plant the seed or sapling. Then it has to be nourished and cultivated. With *time* and *diligence*, *watering* and *pruning*, it eventually grows into an adult tree. And in its season, edible fruit is finally realized.

In the same way, a *desire* for holiness, a *desire* to experience God’s power through the fire of His Word is not fruit, it is merely the seed. It is a seed that must be planted, nourished, and cultivated. It takes *time*, *diligence*, and *commitment* to introduce God’s holy Word into our

memory, our thinking, and our daily agenda. Nor will the prince of this world permit us to pursue such a course without opposition.

Do you remember the parable of the sower? The Lord warned us that as His Word is dispersed there will *always* be deterrents to discourage and frustrate. You can know that your enemy will be busy trying to destroy any seed of desire that has been sown both in the initial process of getting started *and* every step along the way.

When you start applying God's Holy Word to your life in this more concentrated form, you will undoubtedly face spiritual warfare that could be more vicious than you have ever known, not only the flesh and blood kind, but fierce, subtle darts, the kind that eat your time, distort your priorities, and bleed your emotions.

At one time Paul said:

...a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries. (I Corinthians 16:9 NKJV)

I've always thought it interesting that Paul said "...*and there are many adversaries*," not "**but** *there are many adversaries*". Opposition, apparently, wasn't a surprise to Paul. He just took it for granted. He knew it was to be expected. Right now a great and effective door is wide open for you, *and you* can take it for granted that your adversary will do anything and everything to stop you from walking through it.

Earlier in this chapter we noted the correlation between God's Word and the working of His Holy Spirit in our lives. Now we see, more clearly, some of

the reasoning behind it. It is the *fire* of God's Word hidden in our hearts that fans the flame of the Holy Spirit and revival in our lives. It is this same Word, memorized and branded on our hearts and lives that is a Sword for the Holy Spirit to use against our ever avid enemy, an enemy who will oppose us every step of the way. He is well aware of the power available to Christians who take the Holy Scriptures seriously.

Who could attempt to reveal the total worth of God's Holy Word as it is made a vital part of a believer's life. Surely it is as vast and inevitable as its Author. Do you want to see revival in your life? Do you want your lamp to shine brightly in a darkening world? Yes, you may be only one person in a great sea of humanity, but you are one person. You have a great God, who has given you access to a powerful resource and an awesome weapon, if you will choose to activate it in your life.

Someone has said that many Christians "weep over beautiful truth, only to draw back when it comes to putting it into practice." Perhaps you have also heard it said, "*Truth that is unacted on is more dangerous than error.*"

I would caution you against allowing the enemy of your soul to rule victorious by letting the challenge of this chapter and this book become just part of an accumulation of truth deposited somewhere back in the graveyard of your mind.

**Right to Life statistics*

***Wesley Deuwel, Revival Fire (Zondervan Publishing House, 1995) pp. 44-48*

****H.H. Halley, Halley's Bible Handbook (Zondervan Publishing House, 88th printing, 1988) p. 786*



Chapter 6

I CAN'T MEMORIZE!

How many times have you heard it? Mention the idea of memorizing Scripture to the “unsuspecting” and what kind of response do you get? I’m often greeted with a quick, “Oh, I can’t memorize!” These three words seem to pop out of mouths before minds even have time to process the question. It’s like, “Wow! I’d better cut this short. This could get me into deeper stuff than I want to think about.”

When was the last time you asked someone about their place of employment, their address, or telephone number and had them respond, “Oh, I don’t know. I can’t memorize!” Perhaps you have noticed that this little cliché seems to be programmed for use only at the mention of *Scripture*?

Why do you think some people would want to be so flippant in response to a very reasonable subject of conversation? Why do some who profess to love and serve the Lord, seem to shrink from the very thought of hiding His Word in their hearts? Why do Christians from different parts of the country, with different backgrounds and interests, people who don’t even know each other, use these same three little words for a quick cop out?

No one knows what happens when God's people experience Scripture as it is intended better than our arch enemy, the great deceiver. He has been busy, especially in recent years, desensitizing God's people to its power and importance. He is the one who relates God's Word to hard work and legalism. A tree may only be a little off course to start with, but unless it corrects itself, it will veer further and further off course the more it grows. And as this satanic tree has taken root in God's family it has borne fruit and guided His children further and further off their intended course. Now we have reached the place where the very idea of memorizing Scripture, for many, is perceived as a tedious drudgery.

Men and women of God throughout the ages have relied on the power of memorized Scripture to sustain their daily walk with Him and offer strength and direction in trials. Memorizing Scripture has been the mainstay and joy of believers throughout the centuries and *God's Word has not changed*. It has not lost its power. God's command to His people still echoes through the centuries: "*Fix these words of Mine in your hearts and minds....*" (Deuteronomy 11:18-21).

And again in Ephesians 6:12 our Commander in Chief orders us to *take the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God* and *stand* against the enemy of our souls who constantly struggles for supremacy in our lives. But how many Christians today are armed and dangerous, prepared for the daily battle against the one who is out to kill, steal, and destroy everything we hold dear? It's not that God's warriors have laid down their arms. Many of us haven't even bothered to pick them up. Of what value is a soldier in a war without a weapon?

And what military genius in all the world could ever convince an opposing army to lay down their weapons, even before they have picked them up, by simply telling the rank and file that they were completely incapable of obeying their Commander-in-Chief? But what do we hear from God's rank and file? "Take the Sword of the Spirit? Memorize God's Word? Why would He give such an order? I can't memorize!"

And what does one who says he "can't memorize Scripture" use for defense if enemy attacks occur when he doesn't have his Bible in hand? Not only is he at war with no Sword, he has conceded the battle with no contest having let enemy chicanery convince him that no defense was necessary or even possible and that any effort on his part to protect himself is basically useless. Whoever would have thought that we could have strayed so far from our roots and that Satan could so skillfully deceive some of God's elect with such wiles?

But if God's orders to His army haven't changed, and if His Word is still the same sharp, powerful weapon it has always been, what happened? What brought about this astounding deterioration of morale and caused rebellion in the ranks? How could it be that so many 21st Century Christians would simply reject the orders of their Commander-in-Chief and unilaterally declare them null and void, thus leaving themselves defenseless against an aggressive and ruthless enemy?

You can be sure of two things: it didn't happen by coincidence and it didn't just happen overnight. In the early years of the Roman church, the Bible was basically in the hands of the church hierarchy, so Satan focused on them. He managed to pollute biblical teaching by luring

these religious pontiffs into unspeakable corruption. Recognizing the controlling power they exercised over the downtrodden and oppressed, these men invented their own laws and religious edicts to accommodate their depraved appetites.

They used bribery and even committed murder in order to gain political advancement. They lived lavishly and built up their personal fortunes by confiscating property, selling church offices, and levying cruel taxes on those already in abject poverty. They satisfied their odious lusts by sexually exploiting virgins, wives, nuns, and young boys. Anyone who owned a Bible and/or disagreed with the dictates of the church hierarchy was declared to be a “heretic” and (in the name of Christ) innocent men and women were brutally tortured and burned at the stake. It was indeed “Dark Ages”, when the laity lived in subjection to cruel and unscrupulous church leaders who claimed exclusive rights to the Scriptures as self-proclaimed “vicars of Christ, holding on this earth the place of Almighty God”.*

It was the invention of the printing press in 1455 that sparked what is commonly known in history as the Reformation. At that time, the Lord raised up godly men whose names stand out in history as some who proclaimed sound biblical teaching and fought for the right of the common man to have access to God’s Word for themselves. Among them were Giralomo Savonarola in Italy (1452-1498), Martin Luther in Germany (1483-1546), William Tyndale in England (1494-1536) and John Calvin in France and Switzerland (1509-1564). All of these men and many others were persecuted and/or burned at the

stake for renouncing the corrupt practices taught by the reigning church. They gave their lives to make the Scriptures available to the common man.

Today, you and I bask in their accomplishments giving little thought to the price that was paid on our behalf. From that era when Scripture was so precious, the pendulum has now swung to the other end of the spectrum as today we are lavished with an abundance of Bibles and translations that fill our shelves. Having lost the battle of being able to keep the Scriptures out of our hands, the enemy of our souls has had to pursue more devious and subtle tactics of control. Realizing the danger of what can happen when Christians experience the power and the joy that is available to them in God's Word, he has worked hard to guide them away from its influence in their lives. He has even gained some success with the idea that Scripture is something of an unwelcome interruption in their daily agenda to the point where even reading it, for some, has become a laborious chore.

And memorizing it?? Well, he has gained even more ground there, managing to convince a good portion of God's army that this is an accomplishment completely beyond their capabilities, or that they have no time in their busy schedules for such a superfluous activity.

It's difficult to understand how satanic forces could beguile their way right into our midst, but they have! Some of us who have actually swallowed their demonic lies are so completely convinced, we have no qualms whatsoever about overtly notifying anyone who brings up the subject, "Oh, I can't memorize!" Could it be that the great deceiver has actually made the greatest joy and privilege available

to God's people as well as their most powerful weapon into a stigma that many seem anxious to avoid?

Has he convinced you that you are incapable of memorizing God's Word? Do you consider the mighty Sword of the Spirit, the weapon our God has provided for His people to use in the every day battle of life, to be beyond your grasp? Do you contend that even though the Lord has commanded you to take the Spirit's Sword and hide His Word in your heart, you are incapable of doing so?

Where did such thinking originate? Let's dig a little deeper. Look at Matthew 4:8-9:

Again, the devil took Him (Jesus) to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give You," he said, "if You will bow down and worship me."

Notice that Satan showed our Lord ...*all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor*. It must have been an awesome sight. Jesus was faced with a crucial choice. He knew that ahead was humiliation, rejection, and suffering of a magnitude never before (nor since) experienced by any other man. The great deceiver was anxious to divert His focus. The enemy knew well that if he could seduce our Lord into taking the easy way out, he would have won the battle of all times. He said, in essence, "I know God's plan for You. It's to rule the world, isn't it? But the way He has it planned is not going to be easy, and You don't need all that hassle. It's really not necessary. *There's an easier way*. I can just give it to You if You'll listen to me. This way You won't have to go

through all the pain and suffering You know is coming. I can take care of everything for You. Trust me!”

In the same way, Satan whispers into the believer's ear today, “Yes, I know God has said, ‘*take the Sword of the Spirit*’, but that command was written thousands of years ago. They didn't know then that Bibles would be as plentiful as they are today, did they? Memorizing Scripture is hard work. You don't need that hassle. It's really not necessary. *There's an easier way*. Just listen to me. You have your Bible. You can read it anytime you want, can't you? If anyone mentions *memorizing Scripture*, just say, ‘Oh, I can't memorize!’ That'll shut them up in a hurry. Trust me!”

There has to be no question but that the *I can't memorize* philosophy is the result of Satan's seductive arrows directed at our minds. It is satanic strategy to lure victims with the easy way out in order to rob them of the protection they need and the rich blessings our Lord longs for them to have. Don't be deceived. Life in this world will never be easy. We, as God's children, must constantly swim against the current to avoid being swept downstream with the crowd.

What was Jesus' response when the prince of this world tried to trick *Him*?

Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.’” (Matthew 4:10 - quoted from Deuteronomy 6:13)

Jesus used the trusty Sword of the Spirit, the Word hidden in His heart, to thwart the attack. We're told:

The Sword

Then the devil left Him.... (Matthew 4:11)

Even Jesus, the God-man, did not paraphrase or use a philosophical argument. In combat He relied solely on His most powerful weapon, the Word of God, the Spirit's Sword. Is this Sword a weapon that was available only to Jesus and a few others who have a special talent to memorize, but not for all of us?

Of course, it's true that some of us can memorize more easily than others. Every mind works differently. Some of us may need to work harder than others taking more advantage of helps and techniques. Also, as we get older, it does become more difficult. (Another good reason not to put it off.)

It's important for all of us to recognize that when the Lord commands us to do something, He doesn't expect us to accomplish it through our own strength. *The Lord's calling is His enabling* and He has exhorted us, actually, commanded:

Fix these words of Mine in your hearts and minds.... (Deuteronomy 11:18)

Take... the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. (Ephesians 6:17)

Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.... (Colossians 3:16)

And the Psalms abound with testimonies of those whose lives have been enriched as they have diligently followed these commands.

Blessing and prosperity:

Psalm 1:1-3 Blessed is the man (whose)... delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

Stability:

Psalm 37:31 The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide. (KJV)

Delight in God's will:

Psalm 40:8 I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart. (KJV)

A righteous walk:

Psalm 119:11 I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You.

Comfort in adversity:

Psalm 119:61 The cords of the wicked have bound me, but I have not forgotten Your law. (NKJV)

Spiritual insight and guidance:

Psalm 119:130 The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple. (NKJV)

Praise and integrity:

Psalm 119:7 I will praise You with an upright heart as I learn Your righteous laws.

If you see yourself as one who *can't memorize*, then it must follow that the Lord has these blessings for others but doesn't intend for you to enjoy them. But then, we know this can't be true, so we must conclude that the one whose business it is to render us impotent has been successful in working his illusions. How well he knows that without a reassuring grip on the all-important Sword, we are not only defenseless against His wiles, we are being robbed of the abundant blessing our Lord wants to lavish on us through His Word.

If the enemy has been able to deceive you in the past with his handy little *I can't memorize* cliché, perhaps now is the time for you to take a stand against him! The Lord has given you powerful Scripture to combat his lies.

What is impossible from a human perspective is possible with God. (Luke 18:27, NLT)

For nothing is impossible with God. (Luke 1:37)

I can do everything with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need. (Philippians 4:13, NLT)

Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. (II Corinthians 3:5)

Evelyn was a 72-year-old widow, a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. She wrote:

There were passages of Scripture I had wanted to learn for years, but had convinced myself that I

couldn't do it so I didn't even try. Then when challenged to memorize a chapter, I thought, Why can't I do that if I ask the Lord to help me? I decided that it might take me longer than some, but I would trust the Lord and give it my best shot.

Although memorizing by chapter is proving to be more difficult for me than it is for younger people, and it's getting harder all the time, it's such a joy, I can't stop. I have a compulsive desire to learn more and more of God's Word.

I don't know why I was satisfied with random verses while growing up. If only I had learned by chapter when my mind was more receptive, it would have been so much easier. Also, while leading Jr. Church, I could have taught the children to memorize by chapter. Then they would have had God's Word *in context* to draw from throughout their lives.

I wish more would respond to the challenge of memorizing chapters. People don't know what they're missing. Sometimes they tell me they could never memorize like I do, but I disagree. I know they are as smart as I am. They could do it if only they would trust the Lord to help them, like I did.

At the time she wrote this, Evelyn had undergone open heart surgery and struggled with other physical problems but used her limitations to advantage. When forced to rest and during wakeful night hours, she memorized, reviewed, meditated, and delighted in the

Word. She had memorized Romans 12, Matthew 5, 6 and 7, as well as Psalms 1, 34 and 100, and was working on the book of I John when the Lord took her home to Himself. Now, I'm sure she's having the joy of quoting her Scripture to the King of all kings and the Lord of all lords *in person*.

If you have been like Evelyn and have been convinced that there was no point in your even trying to memorize God's all-powerful Word, you may want to consider this threefold approach:

1. Stop saying, "I can't memorize Scripture". When you promote this idea, you are actually "aiding and abetting" the enemy. In essence, you are working to bring about your own defeat as well as that of others around you.
2. Take the Lord at His word. He said our competence comes from Him. Jesus said, "*Everything is possible for him who believes.*" (*Mark 9:23*) Realize that you, too, can know the joy of memorizing, meditating, and delighting in God's Holy Word. You, too, can experience its power in your daily life. Trust your all-powerful God and enter into that joy.
3. Most importantly, do not look at Scripture memorization as a negative, legalistic exercise. This is seeing it through the eyes of your worst adversary. Our Lord intends for the memorization of His Word to be a blessing and a delight for His children. Shed the idea of merely memorizing words and anticipate the joy of getting to know the Author in new and exciting ways. Many people gave their lives in order for you to have this privilege.

I Can't Memorize!

You will find practical helps and pointers for getting started in other chapters of this book but as you begin memorizing, remember that you are not alone. Evelyn and others started right where you are now and by God's grace have emerged victorious. Always know that when the Lord commands us to do something, He will give us the ability to accomplish it.

....(He) is able to do infinitely more than we ever dare to ask or imagine. (Ephesians 3:20, Phillips)

*Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.
(Colossians 3:16)*

**H.H. Halley, Halley's Bible Handbook (Zondervan Publishing House, 88th printing, 1988) pp. 44-48*



Chapter 7

MEMORIZE SCRIPTURE? I DON'T HAVE TIME!

Hot on the heels of “I can’t memorize!” is another popular cliché, “Memorize Scripture? Oh, I don’t have time!” If the enemy can’t bog us down with the first one, he’ll do his best to zap us with the second.

When we suggest that we don’t have time, that we’re too busy for such things as memorizing Scripture, what is it we’re really saying? What exactly is *time*, anyway?

Have you ever considered that *time*, the little thing we sometimes treat so casually, is our most precious possession? So valuable is it that the Lord doles it out in portions too minute to even measure. We’re all given the exact amount needed to fill a minute, a second, or any fraction thereof. It doesn’t vary. It doesn’t stretch. It doesn’t shrink. Only as we apply it. Nor is anyone richer or poorer than anyone else in *time*. A rich man can’t buy more when he runs out, nor can a poor man be shorted.

Ours is the freedom to apply our time to whatever purpose we choose, but we must spend it as we get it. We can’t hoard it. We can’t borrow on it or bank it. We may

not keep any over from yesterday, nor apply any of today on tomorrow's account. We have only this day, this hour, this minute, this second to use to make a difference. Once this moment is spent, it is forever gone never to be retrieved.

Our whole life is measured, described, and controlled by how we use our *time*. Our talents, our training, even our commitments have little significance unless we use it wisely. Someone has said, "We all receive a cup of time. We alone decide whether to drink it or spill it." Use it wisely or waste it.

How easy it is to whisk from day to day unable to see (or think) beyond the pressures frustrating that particular moment. It is Satan's urgent agenda to keep us off balance with our lives in turmoil and our eyes focused on the here and now. He would have us take this vital commodity of *time* for granted flitting it away with little thought of waste. It's important for us to remember that only this moment is ours. We must spend it cautiously for we cannot presume upon the next.

We say our schedule is full and we have no *time* to memorize God's Word. What is it that is filling our hours to overflowing? What, specifically, do we have time for? This question can be answered for all of us, with just two words — *our priorities*. From the day we were old enough to make our own choices, our time has been occupied with setting priorities and making decisions.

In America, choices are easy. We decided to get up this morning/not get up; we decided to eat breakfast/not eat breakfast; read the paper/not read the paper; go to work/stay at home; drive down this street/that street; park

here/park there; start cleaning in the kitchen/in the bedroom; fix chicken for dinner/fix fish; give the kids swimming lessons/let them go into gymnastics; have your dental appointment on Tuesday/or Thursday. Decisions, decisions, endless, endless decisions. Some are so automatic we hardly realize they're being made, but all are decisions. Our days are filled with them.

The uncomplicated choices listed above are an insignificant part of our work-a-day world. Books are written about some that are more complex: *Love is a Choice*, *Anger is a Choice*. But the fact is, our whole life is just one continual series of choices: every action, every re-action, every thought. These choices determine our earthly course and our eternal destiny.

I *want* to memorize scripture/I really *don't want* to make the effort to memorize scripture. I *will* take time to memorize/I *would rather* spend my time watching TV, playing golf or . . . (you fill it in). I *choose* to memorize the Word of God as He enables me/I *choose not* to memorize the Word of God. I don't have time.

Our response to these choices will probably be a continuing trend of progression building on other decisions we have made along the way. Just where are *your* priorities taking you?

Because of health problems, I have spent significant time in bed looking at the outside world through our glass bedroom doors. One of my pastimes has been lining up the tall pine trees with the slats in our vertical blinds to see how straight they have grown. Some are as straight as the proverbial arrow pointing straight up to their Creator. Others deviate along the way, but straighten up as they

grow taller. There are also those that squiggle their whole height, but somehow make it up reasonably straight. Some, however, deviate only slightly at the base, but as they continue to grow they make no adjustment and consistently veer further and further off course as time goes on.

How well these trees illustrate the lives of people. Some of us consistently make decisions that keep us right on course, headed straight for the heavenly goal. Others of us squiggle a little at first but straighten up as we grow. There are also some of us who never quite get our priorities straight. The *spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak*, so constant adjustments are necessary to make compensation for unwise decisions. Then there are those of us whose decisions take us off course only a little at the beginning but no adjustment is made to correct the focus of our priorities. As a result, the further we go, the further off course we find ourselves. The priorities we set and the decisions we make determine the course of our lives.

Now, a leaning tree doesn't suddenly jerk back into position and grow straight nor does a quick decision to memorize Scripture immediately cure all spiritual ills. There is no magic in the exercise of Scripture memorization. But the *decision* to begin *is* a first step toward a closer walk with the Lord and adjusting our course.

When we start hiding the Word of God in our hearts, when we meditate and delight in it, then it becomes a basis for making sound decisions. Then we begin to see a change in the direction our lives are headed. The vision of our goal in Christ will become more obvious and accessible as sound decisions guide us on a more direct course.

The Lord made us with a free will. He has given us complete control over our decisions. This is our God-given right. Even He Himself does not violate this principle. Nor can Satan encroach upon it. We alone choose the course our lives will take. The course we take and the way we spend the moments and days He gives us is our own personal choice.

Your Lord has laid out a plan for your life, one of ultimate good and eternal happiness. Satan, the enemy of everything good, plots to divert you into his life of misery and destruction. Both paths are available to you. You alone choose which one to pursue. The stakes are high. Your priorities are Satan's target. The arena for spiritual warfare is your mind, your will, and your decisions. You must guard them well because the great deceiver maneuvers constantly to frustrate your judgment and thereby take control. And a tree or a life just a little off course may continue on into dire digression.

When we set our priorities toward the goals laid down in Scripture, and make decisions accordingly, the Holy Spirit and God's holy angels are poised, ready to help us carry out our resolve.

*The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him. (II Chronicles 16:9)**

*He orders His angels to protect you wherever you go. (Psalm 91:11)**

The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them. (Psalm 34:7, NKJV)

Our arch-enemy is just as real. He is ever ready to deceive and destroy when we disregard the exhortations of God's Word or choose to be uninformed of their existence.

*Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the Devil, your great enemy. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for some victim to devour. (I Peter 5:8)**

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.... (John 10:10)

Often we are oblivious to Satan's skillful wiles until after he has sprung the trap. He and his demonic hosts hover near ever ready to take advantage of our faintest desire to deviate from God's expressed plan. If he can create confusion under pressure, so much the better.

Some years ago, I faced a decision of significance. At the time I was single and in my late thirties. Dating had been part of my life since age fourteen and at fifteen I received the first of many marriage proposals. Society at that time dictated that every healthy, well-adjusted woman should be married. I felt I met the requirements, but marriage never seemed right for me. So I just kept waiting for "Mr. Right" to make his entrance and whisk me off to his castle. Slow he was in making his appearance.

Keep in mind that at this time I had been dating for over 20 years and the field had been forever narrowing. Of the "eligibles" remaining, fewer and fewer could be considered serious candidates for marriage. Into this dismal scene waltzed an unbelievable prospect exhibiting

qualities every woman looks for. His manner was gracious and sociable, gentle and sensitive. He was honest and hard-working. I knew his well-respected family. The fact that he was outrageously handsome, owned three restaurants and drove a Cadillac wasn't too hard to take either.

Unfortunately, our physical relationship developed more rapidly than the basis for a lasting one leading to a tough decision for me. Few Christians have to read their Bible to know what it teaches about fornication and related behavior. Nor was I ignorant about God's condemnation of such. The Holy Spirit warned me emphatically to "abandon ship". There was no question whatsoever in my mind concerning what I should do. But I could not bring myself to walk away from this dream boat.

So I started to rationalize. A rationale that could possibly be used in such a situation is difficult to imagine, but the enemy is a master at twisting our reasoning powers at such times. I had opened the door. He was poised, ready to *devour*. Convictions that had been so strong at first, faded. The longer I played with the temptation, the more I rationalized. The more I rationalized, the fainter became the cautioning voice of the Holy Spirit until I could barely distinguish it at all.

But I couldn't drag my feet forever in such a situation. In desperation I came home one night and taking out my topical Bible, I looked up the word *fornication*. The Lord convicted me in verse after verse after verse as I read His strong condemnations. Knowing *about* these Scriptures was not enough. I needed the *full impact* of the *pure, Holy Word of God* to unscramble my confusion and thwart the attack. Satan could not stand

against the power of God's Word. His grip loosened and he fled. When I closed the book, the temptation was gone. I walked away from the relationship without looking back. Just thinking about the subtle trap that was about to be sprung on my life still makes me cringe.

I knew well *about* what Scripture taught. There was no question at all in my mind regarding what I should do. But until I actually fed the *literal* Word of God into my decision-making process, Satan was able to sway my judgment. I was in danger of committing a grave sin that would have affected my entire life. Had there been memorized Scripture already planted in my heart and thinking, I would have had my *Sword* in hand and not been caught off guard.

This vividly demonstrates the importance of hiding the Word of God in our hearts so it is immediately and consistently available when the enemy snipes in vulnerable places. In those days, I relied on my *knowledge about the Sword*. This did not prove adequate in the face of a persistent siege. When I failed to refer to the Book at the moment of temptation, I found myself more vulnerable than I had ever dreamed possible. We don't always have our Bible in hand to consult, or weakened in warfare, we may fail to read it. Now I know the difference between relying on the Book, or my knowledge *about* the Book, and relying on the strength of God's Word *in my heart*. The *Sword of the Spirit in my heart* is always handy to grab when needed.

This was the experience of "Miss Average Christian" on a clear issue. How much more do we need God's Word in our hearts and minds to give us the basis for sound decisions in dilemmas that are much less

obvious? When a high-stress factor further complicates our thinking, there is even greater need for the solid, consistent impact of God's Truth.

It especially saddens me when someone says they have no time to memorize Scripture. Of all people those out there on the cutting edge of life need this protection. Sometimes when I talk with them, I sense the tension mounting as they consider adding one more activity to their packed agenda. They see memorizing God's Word as just another pressure in their day, when in truth, it would be a steadying force to counter frustrations.

Do you know the screeching sound of brakes that have no lining, metal rasping against metal with no buffer? This is how I see a busy person struggling to function without God's Word as a buffer to their stress. They are denying themselves God's provision, the ever-present, never-failing Word of God stored in their heart, handy for reference, ready for defense.

Our great adversary is on constant alert, poised like a cobra ready to strike. When we are stretched to the limit, he is quick to move on the opportunity.

Pat is a staunch Christian friend, well grounded in the Word, happily married to a fine Christian man. She and her husband had just moved into a new house and were experiencing serious disagreements. Pushing herself beyond her physical ability, she was completely devastated, confused, and exhausted. Her husband was similarly spent. Satan had apparently watched with interest and recognizing the opportunity pounced with gusto. Pat was well aware of her sacred marital commitment and did not take it lightly. In the past she would never allow

herself to entertain thoughts of leaving her husband, but now she found herself dwelling on it.

“This is it! I just can’t handle more hurt. I’ve had all I can take. I want out!” she told herself in desperation. For the first time ever, thoughts of separating from her husband dominated her thinking. Overcome with pressures and fatigue beyond her ability to cope, she had no desire and less energy to think about turning to the Scriptures for help. But the Holy Spirit was faithful, ready with Scripture she had memorized. When Satan tried to spring his subtle trap, the Holy Spirit flashed into her mind, out of nowhere: “You are not your own, you are bought with a price.” That did it.

Immediately, the climate changed. Her eyes sprang open. She realized what was happening. She saw clearly, in a flash, the affect such action would have on her life, on her children, on her witness for the Lord. Satan fled in the light of truth from God’s Word. The temptation was defused. Such is the power of the Spirit’s Sword in crisis.

Pat was not oblivious to the teaching of Scripture concerning separation and divorce. On the contrary, she knew it well. But in this instance, circumstances overwhelmed her. Satanic forces had cornered her and buffeted her to where she found herself crumbling in the face of attack. It was Scripture in her heart that brought her focus back into perspective. Can any of us afford to be without this weapon especially those of us who feel constantly stressed to the limit of our capacity?

Satan is a master at creating pressures and twisting circumstances to devise temptation. If our schedule is so full that we have no time for memorizing God’s word, our adversary is winning. He is capable of

“turning up the heat” even higher (and probably will) to convince us that this is true. Keeping us away from the joy, the strength, and the protection of the memorized Word is an attack in itself. Do we recognize that this is from him? He knows that we are completely vulnerable without our Sword in hand. He knows that in the throes of battle we often have no time to run for our Bible, or weakened in warfare we may not think clearly enough to seek out its strength and wisdom.

That familiar verse in Psalm 37:31 comes to mind again. Speaking about the righteous man, David said:

The law of his God is in his heart; his feet do not slip. (Psalm 37:31)

Why don't his feet slip? According to this verse, it's because he has memorized God's Word and its constant power in his life enables him to make sound decisions. This is the secret of walking with the Lord even amid the struggles and stresses of our day.

“Fix these words of Mine in your hearts and minds....” was our Lord's command to His children in Deuteronomy 11:18. This is still His admonition to us today.

When we find ourselves with a swirling agenda, no weapon of defense and nothing to counter the tensions of our day, we are, of all people, most vulnerable. Should we not heed the exhortation of our God and start hiding His Word in our hearts to keep our eyes focused on Him and our feet from sliding on the slippery path of life?

Temptations come in many different packages. A stressed schedule is not usually a problem for one who is sick. But other types of pressures can make an illness just

as distressing for the one involved. The struggle is just as real. The remedy is the same.

One night as I lay in the dark, weary and in pain, a little voice said to me, "Review 1 Peter." "I just can't," I thought, "I'm too weak, too tired. I hurt too much." What I was really saying is, "I just can't add one more pressure to this night," but the little voice persisted, and I finally gave in.

As I meditated and delighted in Scripture I had memorized, I began to perk up. Before I knew it, I was picking up on other chapters I had memorized and the whole climate of the night changed. The sense of depression and desolation lifted. I was alive again. Memorizing the Word is *not* another negative as our adversary would have us believe. On the contrary, it is God's gift to counter negative forces constantly grating against our lives.

Have you been saying, "I don't have time to memorize Scripture"? Stop for a moment and think. Where is this course leading you? If your schedule is that stressed, perhaps it's time for you to check the focus of your priorities. What is more important to you than making room for your God and enjoying the spiritual vigor He longs to impart to you through His Word?

Many people think that to memorize Scripture, you have to accommodate blocks of time. Actually, the best way is to weave it into your day so it becomes just a natural part of your life.

I know a young wife who began memorizing when she was pregnant with her first baby. She wrote her Scripture on 3x5 cards, a verse per card, and then when the baby came she took the cards around with her whether

she was folding diapers, mixing formula, driving in the car or whatever. She has now delivered her third child and over the interim years has memorized the books of Colossians, Ephesians, II Timothy and Philippians.

Another young mother with two pre-schoolers began memorizing when she was pregnant with her third child. She also used the same technique and quoted her Scripture to her baby as she tended her. She has just delivered her fourth child and has now memorized Colossians, Philippians, II Timothy, Philemon, and Hebrews along with most of Ephesians, and a couple of chapters in Revelation. She has recently begun the book of 1 Corinthians.

A roofing contractor took his cards with him and set (or tacked) them up wherever he was working.

When I first began memorizing in context, I took my Bible to a copier, enlarged the chapter I was working on to a comfortable size, and made several copies. Then I put a copy by my kitchen sink, one on my bedroom mirror, one on my bathroom mirror and wherever I spent any length of time. When I was washing dishes, cleaning the bathroom, putting on makeup or whatever, I could review my Scripture. I still review in bed just after retiring or in the morning when I awaken early.

If you try to snatch a little portion of Scripture before dashing out the door in the morning, Scripture that you may well forget by the time you get to the car, try just meditating on one verse. Then write it on a 3x5 card and take it with you. Go over it while stalled in traffic, eating lunch or waiting through those recorded phone calls, anytime you can snatch a little time from the rat race. Don't try to hurry. Don't feel guilty if you have to

spend a day, a week, or a month on one verse. Don't let it be a pressure. Pursue it leisurely, and look at your card as often as you like until you have it well in mind. Just let it be a joy.

The big thing is to decide to make God's Word a practical part of your life. Once you have made the decision, you'll be able to develop your own ways of working it into your day. Your decision should be to *make it a priority* as any other priority in your life. As you find time for the other things, you'll also find time for this. It's not a matter of *time*, it's a matter of *priorities*.

To illustrate this point for a class of business students, an expert in time management pulled out a one gallon, wide mouthed Mason jar and, setting it on the table in front of him, proceeded to fill it with fist-sized rocks.

When no more rocks would fit, he asked the class, "Is this jar full?" "Yes!" was the unanimous response. "Really?" he replied. Then reaching under the table he pulled out a bucket of gravel and dumping it into the jar, he shook it into the space between the big rocks and asked the group once more, "Is the jar full?"

"Probably not!" one of them answered. "Good!" he replied and again reaching under the table, he brought out a bucket of sand. As he dumped it into the jar, they watched it trickle into the empty space left between the rocks and the gravel. Once more he asked the question, "Is this jar full?" "No!" shouted the class. "Good!" was again his response. Grabbing a pitcher of water, he poured it into the jar until it was filled to the brim. Then he looked at the class and asked, "What is the point of this illustration?" One eager beaver raised his hand and blurted out, "The point is: No matter how full your schedule is,

you can always fit more things into it if you really try!”

“No”, the teacher replied, “that’s not the point. It teaches us: If you don’t put the big rocks in first, you’ll never get them in at all.”

But let’s apply this principle in a little different way. Some rocks seem to have a way of usurping that first place position without our even realizing it. What are the “big rocks” that are assuming first place in your “jar of time”? Are they really what you want the message of your life to be?

Perhaps we should all ask ourselves, “Just why has God given *me* these minutes and hours and days on this earth?” It’s easy for us earthlings to forget that *time* is not *forever*. One day our *time* will burst into eternity. We will reach for another moment and grasp the great forever. All decisions will have been made. The accomplishments of our lives will be revealed in one of two ways: wood, hay and stubble *or* gold, silver and precious stones (I Corinthians 3:12-15). Only one breath separates any of us from that moment.

David said:

*Our days on earth are like grass; like wildflowers, we bloom and die. The wind blows, and we are gone — as though we had never been here. (Psalm 103:15-16)**

*We are here for only a moment, visitors and strangers in the land as our ancestors were before us. Our days on earth are like a shadow, gone so soon without a trace. (I Chronicles 29:15)**

*Lord, remind me how brief my time on earth will be. Remind me that my days are numbered, and that my life is fleeing away... An entire lifetime is just a moment to You; human existence is but a breath. (Psalm 39:4-5)**

James said:

What, after all, is your life? It is like a puff of smoke visible for a little while and then dissolving into thin air. (James 4:14, Phillips)

Isaiah said:

All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of our God stands forever. (Isaiah 40:6,8 - also quoted in I Peter 1:24-5)

Life is tenuous. Time is fleeting. Just where are your priorities taking you?

Has the enemy convinced you that there is *no time* in your life for memorizing God's Holy Word? Has he stressed your schedule to frustrate your thinking and pressure your decisions? Has he managed to focus your priorities on the here and now for this *one moment*? Be aware: As long as he can control *this* moment, he is in command. How well he knows *this* moment is your life because life can only be lived *one moment* at a time.

This moment you have the option of choosing for this world or choosing for time *and eternity*. God's Word is forever, and it is all-powerful. When you memorize it

in context, you have it always in mind to combat the pressures of an intense agenda and an ardent foe. Build it into your life. Wrap your decisions around it. Lean on it. Arm yourself against your ever active enemy.

Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them... Fix these words of Mine in your hearts and minds.... (Deuteronomy 11:16,18)

Set your minds (your priorities) on things above, not on earthly things. (Colossians 3:2)

The world and all its passionate desires will one day disappear. But the man who is following God's will is part of the permanent and cannot die. (I John 2:17, Phillips)

* *New Living Translation*



Chapter 8

PREPARE YOUR MIND FOR ACTION!

(I Peter 1:13)

The Lord always meets us where we are and works with us at a pace we can handle. Considering our diverse personalities, our varied capabilities, and current location in our spiritual journey, we are not all in the same starting position. If, for example, you're really excited about memorizing God's Word, raring to go and can't wait to get started, you're obviously not in the same starting position as the one who is thinking, "Yes, I know this is something I *should* do," but is less than enthusiastic about the whole idea.

If, in all honesty, you have to admit that you fall in the second category, don't be discouraged. This chapter will help you peer into the reasons behind such thinking and, hopefully, assist in helping you "straighten your aim" before actually pitching in.

I'm sure you know that Scripture memorization, in itself, is no magic formula. It is possible to intellectually memorize the words with little or no heart involvement

or life application. The results of such an exercise can prove to be meaningless and could even be discouraging.

Gardens must be prepared before precious seed is introduced. Clearing must take place and rocks removed. Cultivation, water and fertilizer help ready the ground. Similarly, the soil of our hearts may need to be prepared for hosting the precious *holy* seed of God's Word.

At one time, I memorized the entire book of Philippians but soon forgot it. Perhaps I tried to learn it too fast without proper review. But I believe the major reason was that I looked at it as more of a mental exercise than a spiritual adventure. I respected the authority of God's Word and memorized the words, but there was no vital interaction with the Author. Nor did I look to the marvelous truths and promises of the Living Word to bathe my soul and feed my spirit in meditation. It was more of a legalistic ritual and was not the delight for me then as it is today.

Another example that illustrates the possible futility of trying to plant God's Word in an unready heart is even more depressing. A recent cult leader, heavily into sexual perversion and other ungodly practices, was reportedly able to quote long passages of Scripture and in some cases used this to attract people to him. However, the fruit of his life indicated that this must have been something of an ego trip and a mental discipline with little real heart involvement.

Although the circumstances and individuals in these two examples are vastly different in both cases the Word memorized seemed to be introduced into unprepared soil which yielded little or no harvest. Preparation of the

heart's soil prior to planting the seed might have significantly changed the outcome.

I must be quick to add that heart preparation, per se, has not consistently proven to be a prerequisite for someone launching into a program of Scripture memorization. There are some who began memorizing rather reluctantly who soon radiated joy and started bubbling with enthusiasm as the Word took root and the Lord began to reveal Himself in special ways. As usual, we can't put the Lord in a box nor presume to know how He'll work in any given situation. His Word is living and powerful and He will do what He will do, for His own reasons, sometimes in spite of His reluctant children. So we offer here no hard and fast rule, merely suggest that a heart that is prepared offers more fertile soil than one that is not, and we trust that this chapter will help to clarify your focus in this direction.

To test the fertility of the "soil" in your heart, you may find it helpful to compare your attitude toward God's Word with that of the author of Psalm 119. How does your heart respond to these scattered excerpts from his Psalm?

vs 14 - I rejoice in following Your statutes as one rejoices in great riches.

vs 16 - I delight in Your decrees; I will not neglect Your word.

vs 20 - My soul is consumed with longing for Your laws at all times.

The Sword

vs 24 - Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors.

vs 47 - I delight in Your commands because I love them.

vs 48 - I lift up my hands to Your commands, which I love, and I meditate on Your decrees.

vs 54 - Your decrees are the theme of my song wherever I lodge.

vs 77 - Your law is my delight.

vs 97 - Oh, how I love Your law! I meditate on it all day long.

vs 103 - How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

vs 111 - Your statutes are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart!

vs 120 - I stand in awe of Your laws.

vs 127 - I love Your commands more than gold, more than pure gold....

vs 140 - Your promises have been thoroughly tested, and your servant loves them.

vs 159 - See how I love Your precepts....

vs 162 - I rejoice in Your promise like one who finds great spoil.

vs 163 - I hate and abhor falsehood but I love Your law.

vs 167 - I obey Your statutes, for I love them greatly.

S-o-o-o, what is your heart's reaction to the psalmist's prayerful expressions toward God's Word? If your spirit is saying, "Amen! Amen" or at least relating positively then I suggest your soil is ready! In fact, you may already have begun storing this marvelous treasure in your innermost consciousness. This is why you can relate to his expressed delight and esteem for the Scripture therein expressed.

If, on the other hand, you're saying, "This is just not where I am!" then you should be aware that there is one who is deceiving you and inhibiting what should be a natural hunger and thirst in you that God's people have for His Word. Your arch enemy has succeeded in stifling your appetite for what is one of the greatest sources of power as well as one of the greatest joys that the Lord has made available to His children.

"Brainwashing" is a 20th century term. It automatically conjures up visions of heinous ways that have been used to twist men's thinking in order to introduce gross lies that they would not normally accept. Perhaps the most devious application of its use has been as Satan himself has manipulated the minds of Christians in managing to suppress their natural desire to consume the powerful Word of their awesome God to the point of even

making its memorization something that is bothersome and negative to them.

What has this conspirator planted in your mind regarding the Word of God? Has he told you, for example:

That you can't memorize Scripture? That you don't have the mental ability to retain even a verse, so how can you take on a whole chapter? (If so, you may want to check out chapter 6, *I Can't Memorize!*)

That memorizing Scripture is a real drag; that it's just too much work and isn't anything you want to get involved in?

That reading the Bible is something you *owe* God and that by merely reading it you are fulfilling your daily obligation?

That just by reading your Bible, *you* are doing *God* some kind of favor?

That you have no time in your stressed agenda for this added burden? (If so, chapter 7, *Memorize Scripture? I Don't Have Time!* deals with this concern in detail.)

Thoughts like these need to be viewed as part of the "rubble" that should be addressed in order to give the living seed room to grow. Perhaps this is why Peter admonishes us:

...prepare your minds for action.... (I Peter 1:13)

This is like preparing your garden for planting, removing skepticism from your thinking just as you remove rocks from your plot of ground and adding positive input as you add the needed nutrients to your garden. For example:

1. Be aware that **any** negative thinking toward God's Word is directly from Satan's bag of tricks. James 4:7 tells us:

Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Reject negative thoughts regarding the Word for what they are — **lies**. Satan is the father of lies and is a master at masking his intentions. Fill your mind with Scripture — **truth** — written by those who openly express their love for, and delight in, God's Word. You may want to memorize a few positive verses so that when Satan tempts you with negativism toward the Word, the Holy Spirit can use the verses you have learned as a *Sword* against him. (Ephesians 6:17)

2. Always remember that you are dealing with the Holy Script of a Holy God, not the ideas and concepts of mere men. II Timothy 3:16 says:

Every Scripture is God-breathed — given by His inspiration.... (Amplified Bible)

II Peter 1:20-21 tells us:

...no prophecy of Scripture is of any personal or private... interpretation. For no prophecy ever originated because some man willed it — it never came by human impulse — but as men spoke from God who were borne along (moved and impelled) by the Holy Spirit. (Amplified Bible)

When you begin to memorize God's Word, you are embarking on a spiritual adventure with an awesome Guide. God's Holy Spirit, the Author of the Book, will become your *Enabler*, your *Teacher*, your *Interpreter*, your *Deliverer*, your *Counselor*.... Look to Him. Rely totally on Him. He longs to make this one of the most exciting parts of your spiritual journey.

3. Know that God's Word is *your* link with *eternity*. Although the book in which it is printed will one day crumble and disintegrate, the *Word* inscribed on its pages is forever. Through this Eternal Word, it is within your power to access eternity right now in this life. When you memorize the Scriptures, you are actually grasping a piece of eternity. Never lose sight of the fact that you are laying hold on the very thoughts of your omnipotent God. As you meditate and delight in His Holy Word, you will gain added insight into divine secrets about *eternal joys, eternal blessings, eternal pleasures, eternal hope, eternal love, eternal peace, eternal wisdom, eternal promises... and the list goes on.*

We're told that:

People are like grass that dies away... But the Word of the Lord will last forever. (1 Peter 1:24, NLT)

Recorded in three of the gospels are Jesus' words:

Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away. (Matthew 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33)

Prepare Your Minds for Action!

Is there ever any question in your mind as to whether the sun will come up tomorrow morning or whether the trees will lose their leaves this fall? According to this verse, it is much more likely that such things would happen than for the Lord to ever go back on His Word. The things that you and I see as absolute in this world cannot even be compared with the validity, the stability and the integrity of God's holy, inerrant Word.

The enormous privilege we have of owning a copy of this eternal treasure cannot be over-estimated. That we as mere mortals might consider the opportunity we have of storing this treasure in our hearts to be less than a wonderful gift from God is unthinkable. We may live only for this world if we so choose. But when God's Word lives in our heart and becomes a meaningful part of our thinking, we are incorporating an *everlasting treasure* into our life that will bear *everlasting* fruit. If we have no desire or time to embrace this little piece of eternity God has given us here, what is going to be our joy in heaven?

Prepare your mind for action and receive the Word with blessing. It will be yours to enjoy now and forever!!!

Your Word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. (Psalm 119:89 - emphasis added)



Chapter 9

OKAY! SO WHERE DO I START?

(I probably should warn you that this is more of a reference chapter that is longer and more academic than you may want to attack at one sitting. You may prefer to just browse through it for now noting the contents, then if you need it, you know it's here for reference.)

So, having warned you, let me quickly add: Has the Lord stirred your heart to begin hiding His Word away in that most intimate place? (Not just a verse here and there, but building verses into chapters and chapters into books.) You are in for an exciting adventure! This chapter is designed to help with the nitty gritty on how to get started. As you memorize and meditate on the very words of your Lord, you'll find them penetrating the very essence of your being. They'll feed your soul and bathe your spirit as nothing else. You'll experience parched areas of your life being satisfied as never before. Yes, you'll find yourself experiencing the all loving, all powerful Author in new and intimate ways.

So where to start? The Lord always meets us where we are and works with us at a pace that fits our individual

abilities. Considering our diverse personalities, our varied capabilities and just where we might find ourselves in our spiritual journey, we offer no rigid format, merely suggestions that we hope will be a basis for you to develop your own ideas.

1. Use a valid translation.
2. A favorite chapter is sometimes a good beginning.
3. Be accountable to someone.
4. Be prepared for spiritual warfare.
5. Plan a strategy.
6. Choose your time.
7. Build carefully.
8. Pray for divine insight and application in your daily life.
9. Meditate and delight in the eternal truths.
10. Take breathers as needed and then go on.

1. Which Translation....

For years the Authorized King James Version of the Bible was used almost exclusively by protestant denominations. In that day, there was no difficulty in choosing a translation because the King James was considered to be *the* Bible. Today, a great assortment of versions flood the market. The problem of trying to choose the best to memorize may have contributed to the hesitation (perhaps even reluctance) of many to pursue memorizing Scripture at all.

Some people still feel strongly that the King James is *the* version and use it exclusively. Or it may be that it has been a familiar friend over the years and they, understandably, are reluctant to change. I memorized the

King James for 50 years, but have recently enjoyed the New International Version. There are times, though, when I still revert back to the King James especially for Old Testament passages. You, too, may opt to vary translations depending on the passage you are memorizing.

Many consider the New American Standard Version to be the most accurate translation. Other people like the New International Version, and the New Living Translation also is now getting high marks. In the past I have considered the Amplified Bible to be an unwise choice, but recently I heard someone quote part of Psalm 119 in that version and was awed by its power. I, therefore, no longer discourage memorizing in that version. But paraphrased editions, such as the Living Bible, or some of the other more contemporary renditions now coming into vogue would be a little like memorizing a story book.

So our recommendation is that you use a valid, recognized translation. The one used in your church might be a good choice. If you have questions, I'm sure your pastor would be happy to discuss them with you.

2. Choosing a Chapter....

Ask the Lord to guide you to the Scripture He wants you to start with. A chapter He has already impressed on your heart may be good to consider. No matter how familiar it might be, you'll find the Holy Spirit inspiring you with new discoveries and insight as you begin memorizing it. You'll find it sinking into cracks you didn't even know were there, very different from just reading or even studying it.

One lady who was in a troubled marriage said she kept going back to read Psalm 121 for comfort. Understandably, she chose this chapter to memorize so it would always be in her mind to draw from.

Some who started with the first chapter of an epistle found it so exciting and the impact on their life so profound, they just kept on going. You may remember the young mother we mentioned in an earlier chapter who had two preschool children and was pregnant with her third child when she determined to memorize the first chapter of Colossians. Although she had significant difficulty getting started, there was no stopping her once she completed that first chapter. She went on to memorize the entire book of Colossians as well as Philippians, II Timothy, most of Ephesians, some of Revelation, and has recently completed the book of Hebrews. It has been a life-changing experience for both her and her family.

Another young mother who found her quiet time dull and tedious said that Scripture to her was dry and uninteresting and that she retained little of what she read. But when she began to memorize in context, she came face to face with a compassionate, personal God. Her devotional time assumed an aura of anticipation and excitement. Her daily walk took on new life. After memorizing the first chapter of II Timothy to which she had committed, she went on to finish that book and then memorized the books of Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. She now considers memorizing God's Word a way of life as do many others. (You may read both of these testimonies in detail in Appendix C, *Not By Bread Alone*.)

If you like a challenge, go for it. A lady wrote me to say she was starting the book of Revelation because

she felt others would not choose it. A grandfather memorized the 176 difficult verses of Psalm 119 to prove for his own satisfaction that it could be done. (He has recited the entire chapter several times in churches.)

If you are a little tentative, you may want to begin with a short Psalm, perhaps Psalm 1, 100, or 121. One day, a friend announced proudly that she had memorized the 23rd Psalm. She said that everyone in the whole world seemed to know it and was especially intimidated by the idea that even movie stars could quote it, but she couldn't. Now, having achieved this goal, she's more confident about taking on something a little more challenging.

The main thing is not to get so bogged down in the selection process that you find yourself in an endless progression of procrastination. Some time ago, two ladies (independent of each other) told me they wanted to start memorizing Scripture in context. I'm sure their intentions were good, but whenever I checked with them to learn the chapters they had chosen, they both kept telling me that they just hadn't been able to decide. As far as I know, neither of them ever did select a chapter or get started with their memorizing.

Satan's ways are subtle. He'll throw in any road block he can to get you off the track. Perhaps he thinks that if he succeeds in delaying you long enough, you'll lose interest. Maybe he's right. Be sure you recognize who is promoting prolonged delays.

Bear in mind that if you find your selection to be a little more ambitious than you can handle for your first effort, you can always shift gears and go back to it when you are a little more experienced.

3. Being Accountable....

Although we have found memorizing Scripture to be pretty much self-propelling once we get into it, it does require commitment and self-discipline to get started. It's good to have someone to whom you can be accountable. Better still someone who will memorize along with you. Then you have a traveling partner. You can share the joy of accomplishment, relish each other's achievements, and encourage one another in the Lord.

Another family member might work well for you. Or you may have a friend (perhaps several) who would enjoy sharing this adventure. You may all want to work on the same chapter or select different ones. If each person in a group takes a different chapter, you could, in this way, cover an entire epistle.

When memorizing with others, it's good to remember that different people like to work at different speeds, so those who prefer a faster pace are sometimes intimidating to those who enjoy taking more time. Be sure to go with the more conservative in the group so everyone can relish the experience. Speedy ones can always select a second portion of Scripture to keep their minds busy, if necessary.

One lady, with a real vision for the tremendous resource available through memorizing the Word, has considered a "multiple" approach. Her idea is to get a group started memorizing in context, and then when they are thoroughly established, to challenge them to find others to start their own groups. The next step would be to challenge these groups to reach out further and so on.

It's important to have a fixed time to get together for touching base and sharing once a week or once every two weeks, whatever fits your schedules. But be sure to make it a *regularly* scheduled event.

4. Be Prepared for Spiritual Warfare....

A long-standing strategy that Satan has used with success is promoting the idea that memorizing the powerful Word of God is boring and dull and must be endured for some legalistic reason. If this is your mind set, be aware that it is the enemy of your soul who is propagating this lie. To overcome this thinking, it will be necessary to stand against him in spiritual warfare. Scripture memorization should be approached with joy and enthusiasm. If this is not where you find yourself, you may want to review the chapter *Prepare Your Mind for Action* which addresses this problem specifically.

Having said this, and assuming that he has not snagged you on that one, be aware that your enemy has many other tricks in his bag. Once you commit to memorizing God's Word, you will be a major target. No one knows the power of Scripture branded on the heart and mind of a believer better than the prince of this world. You can be sure it's not on his agenda for this to be a priority in your life. Be on guard for his trickery.

Satan knows well that any journey begins with the first step so he'll surely try to confuse your priorities and delay your start if he possibly can. It's important to be honest with yourself about what might be legitimate reasons for delay and what is planned entrapment to confuse and discourage.

Even though your intentions may be good, it's easy to get bogged down with this world's agenda. Should you find yourself in a pattern of procrastination, you may want to set a deadline which you determine not to exceed. Then stick to it. Your partner may also be a help in this area.

In the end, the best way to get started is to just *start*. It's a little like going swimming. Sometimes it was hard to take that first step in the old swimming hole, but once we got our feet wet, we found the water was great.

If you have a quick mind and bubble with enthusiasm, you may have no problem getting started, but for you the enemy may pursue other means of manipulation. Unable to slow you down, he may go the other direction trying to get you to race through the Scriptures, taking on portions that are impossible to digest at one time. It's easy in such a situation to become entangled in the process of memorizing just words without giving the Holy Spirit opportunity to lovingly impress the precious truths into your thinking and your daily life. You may experience little benefit, joy, or blessing in just trying to whiz through the Scriptures for the sake of accomplishment. Be sure to take your time and proceed leisurely, because meditating and delighting are important parts of the process. Also, be aware that there is a tendency for those who memorize easily, to also forget as easily. A teenager I know, after going through all the work of memorizing the 54 verses of John 4, sadly forgot them even before she quoted them for credit.

Later in this chapter you'll read about taking breathers. This is a natural part of memorizing, when you freely take time off as a sabbatical and then return refreshed

to joy in the Word. But there seems to be another attack that occurs after you have been memorizing for a while. Although you may have experienced joy and enthusiasm starting out, somewhere along the line you realize it has been replaced with a sense of drudgery. Like losing one's first love. Recognize this as a satanic attack.

The symptoms are: loss of joy, lack of enthusiasm, oppression, and discouragement. If this happens, realize that you are the target of spiritual warfare. The enemy is not at all happy with what you are accomplishing and is trying to discourage and divert your focus from the Word. Take it to the Lord. Have your friends pray for you and with you. More than perseverance is needed in situations like this. It is a battle that must be fought on the spiritual level.

Always remember that this is a journey to be *enjoyed*. Memorizing God's Word should be a joy, a precious time with your Lord in which you give Him opportunity to speak to your soul and minister to the needs in your life. *It is not the exercise of memorizing Scripture that is important; joy lies in the delight of communicating with the Author.* If you are not experiencing this joy, be aware that the enemy is at work and stand against him. He will always be there, prowling around like a roaring lion trying to work his wiles through any means possible.

5. Tips and Techniques....

Once you get started, you'll develop your own methods and techniques, but briefly, here are some that have been used effectively by others.

3x5 Cards:

Some professionals have said that there is great advantage in writing out something we wish to memorize because there is an association between our brain and what we write with our fingers. Many, especially in starting out, write out the verse of Scripture they wish to memorize on a 3x5 card. It can then be used in many ways:

Put it on your mirror when you're grooming for the day.

Put it in the visor of your car for reference in traffic stalls.

Put it by your phone to use while you are waiting for connections.

Tuck it in your pocket or purse to access while you wait for appointments.

A new mother carried it around to set up wherever she was working when folding diapers, fixing formula or whatever.

A woman who worked in a nursery repotting plants put it in one of the little markers used to identify plants and poked it in wherever she happened to be working.

Another woman tied it around her neck, handy to pick up and look at for prompting or review when needed.

A doctor friend kept telling me he was going to start memorizing as soon as he could get around to writing out the Scripture on 3x5 cards. He had the cards but just couldn't get around to writing it out. I suggested that he copy his chapter on a

copier. (Enlarge it if desired.) Then cut up the verses and tape or glue them to the cards. Later, while seeing me in the emergency room, he proudly pulled the cards out of his pocket and filled me in on his progress.

Copying Longer Portions:

I personally like to take my Bible to a copier and enlarge a page or double page. Then I make several copies to spread around: one on my bathroom mirror, one on my bedroom mirror, one by my kitchen sink and anywhere I will be spending time. These work as reminders as well as prompters. Someone else who copies an entire page finds it handy to use while taking her daily walk.

Audio Tapes:

If you are an auditory learner, you may find audio tapes or CD's helpful. If you have the version you wish to use in a professional set, you can use that, or you can read your Scripture onto a tape yourself. You may find it helpful to record the passage you are working on several times onto another tape to avoid repeated rewindings. Now, as you quote with the tape you can go over it as many times as you wish without having to rewind.

The Bible says that *faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" (Romans 10:17, NKJV) so *hearing* the Scripture in this way is an added benefit.

Again, you'll undoubtedly be developing your own ideas once you get started. No matter what strategy you apply, be aware that it is rote *repetition, meditation, and review* that will impress the Scripture on your mind and brand it on your soul for the Holy Spirit to use in powerful ways as you face your work-a-day world.

6. When to Memorize....

Some people like to have a set time in which they do their memorizing like Sunday afternoon. There are those who enjoy including it in their daily devotions. Others like to meditate on their Scripture just before retiring and go over it in their mind before going to sleep. They feel that it then works on their subconscious while they are sleeping. And if they awaken in the night, or when they wake up in the morning, it often still lingers in their mind. If you have trouble setting aside a specific time, plan to work it into your daily routine. As mentioned in the previous section, have your cards or copies handy wherever you happen to be and utilize those spare moments. Women when you're putting on makeup, doing dishes, cleaning house, working in the garden, when you're enroute to work or picking up the kids. Men when you're shaving, commuting to work, when you're eating lunch, working on the car, mowing the lawn or any time your mind is not specifically concentrating on other things.

If you have only a few minutes for your quiet time, rather than breezing through a quick portion of Scripture that may have little impact on your day try in that short

time to just meditate on one verse of Scripture or part of a verse. Jot it on a 3x5 card and take it with you. As you have breaks in the day, memorize just that short passage. It will take a while for you to remember it without looking, but it will soon become a permanent part of your thinking. As you add to it, little by little you'll be surprised at how fast verses grow into paragraphs and paragraphs into chapters. This way you'll always have Scripture with you to meditate on.

7. Build Slowly....

When you begin, don't look at a chapter and say, "I'm going to memorize this chapter." Look at the first verse and say, "I'm going to memorize this verse." When you know that first verse as well as your own name, and only then, go on to the next one. When you have memorized the second verse, say it with the first until you can quote them both together without stumbling or fumbling, and then go on to the third.

Professionals tell us that the first five minutes of learning is the best time to establish something in your mind. So if you're ready for a new verse, it's best to spend the beginning time on the new verse rather than begin with a review of what you've learned. Then, after you've learned that verse thoroughly, go back and review prior verses, paragraphs, and chapters.

It's very important to build slowly, and carefully, because if you don't, at some point, you'll find everything crumbling in on you. Don't try to pass lightly over a difficult area or it will always be a problem. Break it up

into small portions and work on each section until you have it well in mind before taking another little bite. You've heard about eating an elephant one bite at a time, haven't you?

Watch for associations that will help jog your memory when needed like the repetition of a word, consecutive words starting with the same letter, words beginning with the same letter that ended the previous word or acronyms of any association that is meaningful to you. It is often helpful to note the alphabetical sequence or counter-sequence of the first letter in words. Noting the word or even the letter that begins a sentence or a verse will sometimes give you the catalyst needed to recall the whole passage. (Suggestions in detail are discussed in Appendix A, *Helps and Hints on How to Memorize.*)

When we present the challenge of memorizing Scripture by chapter, we sometimes meet people who are disappointed that we don't have a "quickie" method on "Memorizing Made Easy". We know of no short cuts. Commitment is a necessary catalyst. Again, we have found rote repetition, meditation, and consistent review to be the best approach in memorizing and retaining longer Scripture passages as we build little by little, verse by verse on what we have already learned. Be sure to keep in mind that it's not getting to know the words that is important, it is getting to know the Author.

8. Pray for Divine Insight....

Be sure not to approach God's Word as you would any other book. Know that what you are feeding into your heart and making a part of your life is the *Living Word* of

a *Living God*, the *Holy Word* of a *Holy God*, the *Eternal Word* of an *Eternal God*, the *love letter* of a *Loving God*. It is truth, *unadulterated truth*, as exists nowhere else in all of creation. This is Holy Writ that *will not fail*, that *cannot fail*. The integrity of your God stands behind His every word.

Seek the insight that only the Holy Spirit can give. Ask the Lord to apply His truth to your heart and life, to make His Word real and exciting to you, to make it live for you, and vital to you. Ask Him to teach you, convict you, cleanse you, guide you, and encourage you.

For the Word of God is full of living power. It is sharper than the sharpest knife, cutting deep into our innermost thoughts and desires. It exposes us for what we really are. (Hebrews 4:12, NLT)

Pray with the psalmist:

Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in Your law. (Psalm 119:18, NLT)

9. Meditate and Delight - Review Constantly....

In Psalm 1, David reveals his formula for joy and blessing. It is meditating and delighting in God's Word day and night. This is the heart and soul of Scripture memorization. As you memorize a "morsel" of truth, let it fill your mind, ruminate on it, bathe in it. Think about it, as we have suggested, when you're working around the house or in the yard, when you're driving in your car, or lying in bed.

Let it linger in your mind throughout the day and into the night. Get into the habit of filling those idle moments with truth you have assimilated.

As you learn to meditate and delight in Scripture that you've memorized, you'll begin a process that will be precious to you throughout the remainder of your life. Each passage remains with you for you to recall again and again as little by little you build your own personal repertoire and enlarge your basis of meditation.

Such a pattern of meditation and review is clearly taught throughout Scripture. At a crucial time in Israel's history, the Lord's command was clear and concise. And His admonition to the children of Israel in Deuteronomy 11:18-19 is as relevant to us today as it was when He spoke through Moses centuries ago:

Fix these words of Mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are sitting at home, when you are out walking, at bedtime, and before breakfast! (NIV/Living Bible)

Again He reminds us in Joshua 1:8:

Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night....

In these and other passages, the Lord not only emphasizes the need to memorize His Words, but also the importance of constant review so that we will never forget them.

As you review and rethink the truths you have memorized, you will be blessed time and time again by their powerful message. In this way, they become etched on your heart and mind for frequent and convenient reference.

You will also find that memorizing Scripture in context is very contagious. One of the best ways to spread the blessing, as well as to fix it in your own mind, is to share what you've learned with others, not only with your memorizing partner(s), but in a worship service, Sunday school class, Bible study group, any group with which you are involved, even at a dinner party. The Holy Spirit seems to bless these times both for the one who recites and for those who hear the Word quoted from memory. Often those who experience it shared in this way are so impressed, they are encouraged to begin memorizing themselves. Groups, even entire churches, have been inspired to begin memorizing just from the blessing of hearing someone quote a chapter or a book from the heart.

10. Take Breathers....

“It doesn't matter how slow you go or how many breaks you take, just don't stop.” If I had a nickel for every time I've said this to someone, I would have quite a pile of nickels.

Don't let the enemy tempt you with discouragement. If you don't accomplish according to your expectations, who cares? Take your time. Go as slowly as you need to, but above all, *enjoy*. Take breathers as needed, but when you start thirsting for more continue on your journey.

There will be times when you may, for whatever reason, slow your memorizing to a crawl. Give yourself this freedom. There will be times when you stop memorizing altogether for a while — for a prolonged review, just to take a breather, or because of some disruption in your life. Let it happen. Don't feel guilty or discouraged about it. Use the time to meditate and delight on what you've already memorized. The main thing is just *don't stop completely*. Take the pause you need and then begin anew. When I take such a "sabbatical", I always know when it's time to start up again. The Holy Spirit gives me a thirst and longing to get back into His Word and I have no desire to resist.

In Conclusion....

One very special lady who has memorized several books of Scripture and many other random chapters has expressed so well the way many of us feel. "So much Scripture! So little time!" I'm sure as you start drinking from this fountain of Living Water, you, too, will experience a constant longing for *more* no matter how much you may store away in your heart and memory.

I'm sure you have already perceived that the positive aspects associated with memorizing Scripture in context are endless. I find it most exciting to know that there is no better investment in our earthly existence than that of making the *eternal Word* of our *eternal God* a vital and vibrant part of our life. You will find no resource that can possibly compare.

Nothing will rejuvenate your Christian walk and sharpen your focus for the Lord more than memorizing

His Word in context. It is then perpetually available to tap for your every need, for protection, for guidance and counsel, for nourishment, encouragement, and comfort.

If the Lord tarries and we go into persecution as many predict, the Scripture we have memorized will be an invaluable reservoir to draw from, not only for ourselves, but also for our families and friends as well as for others around us.

This is a *forever* investment. *The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of the Lord stands forever.* God's Word stands forever! The Word of God is *eternal*. It is the only "tangible" piece of eternity that we can access in this life.

As you seek the face of your omnipotent God in this life-changing adventure, may He reveal Himself to you in profound and wonderful ways.



Chapter 10

YOUR HERITAGE

*Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord,
the fruit of the womb is His reward.*

(Psalm 127:3, NKJV)

A sense of expectancy grips the world. The promotion of world government and a cashless society, the development of complex surveillance systems, the imminent rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, a United States of Europe in place, all seem to suggest that we are teetering at the end of the age. Christians and Jews alike anticipate the soon coming of their Messiah while the New Age movement poses ready to herald a powerful leader who will rule their world.

If your leanings are “pre-trib”, you are undoubtedly looking for the momentary return of your Lord. If you favor a “mid-trib” or “post-trib” stand, you probably expect to see the anti-Christ appear on the horizon at any moment. Either way, you sense the time is near.

When I was growing up, fifty years ago, astute Bible scholars were similarly persuaded. They saw

prophecy being fulfilled before their eyes and felt that nothing precluded the second coming of their Lord. Other generations also seemed convinced that the end times had arrived. As far back as New Testament days John, the apostle, wrote:

Even now, dear children, we are getting near the end of things. You have heard, I expect, the prophecy about the coming of antichrist. Believe me, there are antichrists about already, which confirms my belief that we are near the end. (I John 2:18, Phillips)

We are told to recognize the signs and to long for our Lord's appearing. But Peter tells us:

...do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. (II Peter 3:8)

The Lord obviously doesn't limit Himself to our concept of time. Other generations have been wrong. What mortal can positively affirm that ours will be the one to hail His coming? This is why we must be *ready* knowing He could arrive at any moment while at the same time preparing for whatever the future may hold if He does not.

We cringe at the rampant erosion of our freedoms, the abandonment of moral standards, and the rejection of absolutes that we have seen in recent years. We have watched Judeo-Christian principles plummet from being

the accepted standard of behavior and ethics to the present climate of skepticism and even animosity. If we're alarmed by the acceleration of evil we have seen in recent years, the corruption, lawlessness, immorality, and depravity, consider what our children will face should the Lord tarry.

In Psalm 127:3 Solomon tells us:

Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a reward from Him. (NLT)

Your children are God's gift to you and your gift to the next generation. So if this is not the generation to hail the second coming of our Lord Jesus, how can we best prepare our children for what unspeakable evil they could well encounter in their day? The spiritual battles they face could be more violent than anything we have experienced perhaps more vicious than ever before experienced in history.

Traditionally, parents work hard to prepare their children for "a good life". They strive to provide security, a good education, good training, and solid values. But this next generation will need much more.

When anti-Christian forces have taken over in other countries, such as Nazi-Germany and Communist China, children have been taken away from their parents and put into state institutions. This was done in an effort to control the thinking and dictate the lives of the next generation. You may want to believe that this can never happen here. Do not be deceived. You may have seen TV specials or heard on Christian radio programs how easy it

has been for the authorities to snatch children, even babies, away from their parents. And how difficult it has been for parents to get them back once this was accomplished. This has been done on a mere accusation of abuse with no trial or substantiation. Obviously, laws permitting such things are already on the books. And as Christians are being cast more and more in a “villainous” role, accusations of mind control and abuse of *children’s rights* could be fabricated and presented as acts in violation of a “politically correct” administration.

This is not written to cause alarm. It is intended to alert you to the fact that we are living in critical days. Do not underestimate the need to prepare your children and arm them spiritually for what could be ahead. The time for preparation could be very short.

In the Old Testament, the Lord gives emphatic and explicit instructions to parents regarding the upbringing of children. Time and again He emphasizes the responsibility of parents to instruct and prepare their children, even little ones (perhaps, especially, little ones) for life in a hostile world.

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 ...you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are away on a journey, when you are lying down and when you are getting up again. Tie them to your hands as a reminder, and wear them on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (NLT)

Psalm 78:1-8 O My people, listen to My teaching. Open your ears to what I am saying... I will teach you hidden lessons from our past — stories we have heard and know, stories our ancestors handed down to us. We will not hide these truths from our children but will tell the next generation about the glorious deeds of the Lord. We will tell of His power and the mighty miracles He did. For He issued His decree to Jacob; He gave His law to Israel. He commanded our ancestors to teach them to their children, so the next generation might know them — even the children not yet born — that they in turn might teach their children. So each generation can set its hope anew on God, remembering His glorious miracles and obeying His commands. Then they will not be... stubborn, rebellious, and unfaithful, refusing to give their hearts to God. (NLT)

According to Bible scholars, an orthodox Jewish boy was pretty much under the care and influence of his mother until he was about 3 years of age. At that time, responsibility for his education shifted from the mother to the father and his training in the Torah began. By the time he was 12 years old, he could usually quote the first five books of the Bible from memory and then he proceeded on to the Psalms and Prophecies.

II Chronicles 31:16 makes specific reference to children, *three years of age*:

In addition, they distributed to the males three years old or more whose names were in the

genealogical records — all who would enter the temple of the Lord to perform the daily duties of their various tasks, according to their responsibilities and their divisions. (emphasis added)

In the priestly order, apparently little boys at the age of three years went to the temple with their fathers to begin their religious training and begin serving in the Lord's house.

Regarding Hannah and Samuel we're told:

After he (Samuel) was weaned, she (Hannah) took the boy with her, young as he was... and brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh. (1 Samuel 1:24 - emphasis added)

According to Maccabees 7:28, Hebrew women usually nursed their children for three years. So the reference to Samuel, *young as he was*, probably suggests that he was about three years old. This was the time when he would normally be weaned and his religious training would traditionally begin.

The Lord carefully taught his people the importance of impressing Scripture on young, tender hearts, while they were still sensitive and responsive. Undoubtedly, the Hebrews began teaching their children to memorize God's Word at the early age of three so it would be received into *virgin* soil. At this time, the impressionable mind would not have to unlearn the things of this world in order to accept the things of the Lord.

Do you think three years old is too young for a child to begin memorizing Scripture? Ponder this! *Perhaps the most difficult mental exercise most of us achieve in our entire lifetime is to learn the English language.* How old were you when you mastered it? How long would it take you to become fluent in English if you were to begin today? The Lord has made the young mind like an enormous sponge with great capacity.

In the New Testament, Jesus emphasized the importance of little children being encouraged in spiritual things. Mark records this interesting incident:

Then some people came to Him (Jesus) bringing little children for Him to touch. The disciples tried to discourage them. When Jesus saw this, He was indignant and told them: "You must let little children come to Me — never stop them! For the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Indeed, I assure you, that the man who does not accept the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." Then He took the children in His arms and laid His hands on them and blessed them. (Mark 10:13-16, Phillips)

Many translations use the term *babies* in describing the little ones who were brought to Jesus in this incident as recorded by Dr. Luke in Luke 18:15. The KJV, NKJV and RSV use the term *infants*.

The King James Version says Jesus *took them up in His arms*. They must have been very young children for Him to pick them up in this way. *These* are the ones Jesus

uses to illustrate tender hearts and minds that are open to accepting the kingdom of God.

There are many stories in the Gospels which tell about people who were brought to Jesus. A parable about the kingdom of God speaks about *compelling* people to come. It is significant that the Lord says here “...*let the little children come to Me — never stop them!*” Apparently *little* children will come to Jesus instinctively if we adults just don’t stop *them*.

And how might we in today’s world “stop” *little* children from coming to Jesus? Could it be by not teaching them how to fix His precious Word in their little hearts and minds, to memorize it, so they can learn about their Lord from His own Word while they are still sensitive and open to His love?

Another incident is recorded in Matthew 18:1-4:

It was at this time that the disciples came to Jesus with the question, “Who is really greatest in the kingdom of Heaven?” Jesus called a little child to His side and set him on his feet in the middle of them all. “Believe me,” He said, “unless you change your whole outlook and become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven. It is the man who can be as humble as this little child who is greatest in the kingdom of Heaven.” (Phillips - emphasis added)

Notice that He *set* the *little* child in the midst of them. He must have picked him up to *set him on his feet*, so he could not have been very old.

Again a *little* one of tender years was used to illustrate humility and was held up as an example of one who is *greatest* in the kingdom of Heaven. Jesus, apparently, could find no better example than one of these little ones, probably a toddler, to illustrate His point.

The writer of Hebrews states:

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by his Son....
(Hebrews 1:1-2 - *emphasis added*)

In the Old Testament, *the Lord spoke to the Israelites through Moses* when He said:

“Fix these words of Mine in your hearts and minds... Teach them to your children....”
(Deuteronomy 11:18,19)

In the New Testament *God speaks to us through His Son*. Jesus said:

“You must let little children come to Me — never stop them! For the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” (Mark 10:14, Phillips - *emphasis added*)

“It is the man who can be as humble as this little child who is greatest in the kingdom of Heaven.”
(Matthew 18:4, Phillips - *emphasis added*)

Why is it that we so often waste these impressionable years and then when they're gone, try to play catch up?

How often have you heard it said that we must wait until children are “old enough to understand”? This is another example of the devil’s treachery. While we’re waiting for them to be *old enough*, he’s busy sowing his seeds of doubt and deception into their sensitive minds. Then when we get around to planting the good seed, the soil is already strewn with trash to be cleared. The enemy doesn’t wait to start his work. Why do we?

We are making a grave mistake if we let other things take priority over teaching our children to memorize God’s Word. The all-important truth of the Word is readily received into the sensitive, responsive heart of a *little* child. It’s important for us to take advantage of an early start because the evil one will not delay introducing his destructive rationale. Do you have to teach a baby how to lose his temper?

Communist leaders have been quoted as saying, “Give us a child until he is seven (years of age) and we will have him for life.” Apparently they are convinced that a child under seven can be easily influenced and indoctrinated and that teaching received before that age will dramatically influence his entire life. They must also conclude that a mind is more prone to resist the introduction of new rationale after the age of seven and must be more difficult to impact after that time. Those who do Satan’s work seem to know the significance of starting early. Do we?

Hebrew law and tradition, as taught in Scripture, were designed to assure that worship of Jehovah God would be passed down from generation to generation and not lost through ignorance. Our Lord was born almost

fifteen hundred years after the law was given. His mother and Joseph were devout Jews, fostered by generations who memorized the Torah and taught it to their children. Their faithfulness to Jehovah, and strict adherence to Jewish law preserved the Messianic line of faith. It was into this established Jewish lineage that our Lord Jesus was born.

Could it be that our failure to follow this example of teaching children to memorize the Word is contributing to the breakdown of Christian homes we see today? Some pastors contend that the trend seems to be for second generation Christians, today, to have weaker convictions than their parents. And that the third generation tends to wander even further from the Lord. How different this is from the strong faith lines of Mary and Joseph that persisted for so many generations. Should we be looking more closely to the strict teaching laid down in Scripture for answers to today's problems?

Recipients of the Old Covenant had great reverence for God's Word. They knew well the importance of memorizing the Scriptures in context. Their lives and the lives of their children were wrapped around the Holy Word as they memorized it and meditated on its truths. Should not we of the New Covenant be as vigilant to follow the guidelines laid down for training and equipping our children? Perhaps never before in all history have believers been so remiss in making the memorization of God's Word a viable part of their lives and the lives of their children. And perhaps never before in all of history was it needed more than it is right now in our materialistic and depraved environment.

If the Lord has given you the heritage of children, it's clear from His Word that it is your responsibility to instruct them in His ways. It is your responsibility to see that they are learning to memorize His Word. This invaluable resource will then remain in their hearts to influence their lives whatever happens. The training of our children is not the responsibility of the church, or the Sunday School, or the Christian Day School. The Lord entrusted children and their training to *parents*. We must not fail to prepare them today for what they will surely face tomorrow. Their arch-enemy stands poised, ready to engulf those who are unsuspecting and/or ill-prepared.

As long as your children are under your care and instruction, it's important to stimulate and challenge them to broaden this area of their Christian experience. You may even want to include the entire family in the project.

A wife and mother wrote:

My family had been memorizing Scripture for several years. We knew that it was very important for our children because it explained to them why we did or didn't do so many things. But memorizing a verse here and a verse there seemed a bit disjointed.

The Lord used a *Sword of the Spirit* presentation at our church to inspire our family to begin memorizing the book of James. We have completed the first chapter and are excited about beginning the second. (Ed: They have since completed the entire book.)

At first our children, then 6 and 8, were a little reluctant. They didn't see how in the world they would ever be able to memorize a whole chapter. But we took it a verse at a time, and they began to see that it was possible. In fact, my husband and I hold the children back from memorizing more quickly simply because it's harder for us.

It's amazing how the Lord has given us all insight into what we are memorizing. The children are always reminding us of some verse from the chapter and applying it to a situation. It gives our family a common language when we are encountering a problem and looking to the Lord for a solution.

When Moses was making his parting remarks to the Israelites, his emphasis was on teaching the children. He was about to depart for Mount Nebo where he would meet his Lord. He had lived with these people for over 40 years, struggling with them and with their parents, trying to guide them in God's ways. Now they were on the brink of success. The *Promised Land* lay ahead. These were *his* people, a fledgling nation. They would soon enter enemy territory without him.

Throughout the book of Deuteronomy, Moses reminds them of God's admonitions and warnings in preparation for the crucial days ahead. Now he concludes with this summation. These were his last recorded words to the nation of Israel. If he were to speak to us today, this would undoubtedly be his exhortation to us as we and our children face the crucial days ahead.

“Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you... so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law.”

“They are not just idle words for you — they are your life.” (Deuteronomy 32:46-7)

Deuteronomy 30:19-20 records another exhortation that is as relevant to us today as it was when Moses challenged the children of Israel, hundreds of years ago:

“This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to His voice, and hold fast to Him. For the Lord is your life....”

Moses here emphasized to the children of Israel that a decision must be made. There was no middle ground. They must choose the path they would take. They could either accept and pursue the admonition that had been presented or disregard and reject it. This same choice is yours, even now, as you are reading this. Even now, these hundreds of years after it was spoken, Moses is presenting this same choice to you. You can accept and pursue it or choose to disregard and reject it. It is your choice, yours to decide. The enemy of our souls has a way of manipulating our minds to make us think that by procrastinating or by just doing nothing we are somehow not choosing. Never is our decision so definite as when we choose to do

nothing. If the Lord has blessed you with the heritage of children, this is a decision you must make.

The Words that our Lord spoke to Moses echo down through the ages:

*“Fix these words of Mine in your hearts and minds... Teach them to your children....”
(Deuteronomy 11:18,19)*

“They are not just idle words for you — they are your life.” (Deuteronomy 32:47)

*“Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to His voice, and hold fast to Him.”
(Deuteronomy 30:19-20)*



Chapter 11

GOD SPEAKS

*A man doesn't live on bread alone but
on every Word that God speaks.*

(Matthew 4:4, Williams New Testament)

God speaks! Who speaks? The One we call **our God!** The holy, everlasting, all powerful, all knowing, ever present, just, merciful, loving God. He speaks!

The Mighty God! The Lord of Glory! Our Creator! Our Hope! Our Savior! Our Redeemer! Our great High Priest! Our Mediator! Advocate! Teacher! Great Physician! Counsellor! Shepherd! Deliverer! Righteous Judge! The Lamb of God! The Lion of Judah! The Bread of Life! The Light of the World! The Resurrection and the Life! The Author and Finisher of our faith! The Alpha and Omega! The Prince of Peace! King of kings! Lord of lords! He speaks! And what are His words to this weary world?

“To whom will you compare Me? Who is My equal?” asks the Holy One. Look up into the

*heavens. Who created all the stars? He brings them out one after another, calling each by its name. And He counts them to see that none are lost or have strayed away. (Isaiah 40:25-26)**

(Astronomers tell us that on a dark night we could count about 1,029 stars with the naked eye. But using powerful telescopes they estimate that there are 100 billion stars in our galaxy alone and that there may be as many as 100 billion galaxies in the universe!)**

Who else has held the oceans in His hand? Who has measured off the heavens with His fingers? Who else knows the weight of the earth or has weighed out the mountains and the hills? (He) stretches the northern sky over empty space and hangs the earth on nothing. He wraps the rain in His thick clouds, and the clouds do not burst with the weight. He created the horizon when He separated the waters; He set the boundaries for day and night. The foundations of heaven tremble at His rebuke. These are some of the minor things He does, merely a whisper of His power! Who then can understand the thunder of His power? (Isaiah 40:12; Job 26:7-8,10-11,14)

“...how can you say the Lord does not see your troubles? How can you say God refuses to hear your case? Have you never heard or understood? Don't you know that the Lord is the everlasting God; the Creator of all the earth? He never grows faint or weary. No one can measure the depths of His

understanding. He gives power to those who are tired and worn out; He offers strength to the weak. Even youths will become exhausted, and young men will give up. But those who wait on the Lord will find new strength. They will fly high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint. (Isaiah 40:27-30)

...the Lord your God... is a great and awesome God. (Deuteronomy 7:21)

And He speaks to us mortals! What is He saying to you and to me?

This is what the Lord, (your) King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty, says: "I am the First and I am the Last; there is no other God. I am the Lord, and there is no other Savior." (Isaiah 44:6; 43:11)

"I publicly proclaim bold promises. I do not whisper obscurities in some dark corner so no one can understand what I mean. I, the Lord, speak only what is true and right. I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is good and leads you along the paths you should follow." (Isaiah 45:19; 48:17)

"...do not let your heart turn away from the Lord to worship other gods... commit yourselves completely to these words of Mine. Tie them to your hands as a reminder, and wear them on your forehead. Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are away on a journey,

when you are lying down and when you are getting up again. (Deuteronomy 11:16,18-19)

Oh earth, earth, earth! Listen to this message from the Lord! (Jeremiah 22:29)

That is what the mighty God of the universe, the King of kings and Lord of lords, is saying to us. Are we listening?

Noah listened:

...God said to Noah , “Make a boat from resinous wood and seal it with tar, inside and out.... (Genesis 6:13, 14)

So Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him. (Genesis 6:22)

Abraham listened:

...the Lord told Abram, “Leave your country, your relatives and your father’s house and go to the land that I will show you.” (Genesis 12:1)

So Abram departed as the Lord had instructed him.... (Genesis 12:4)

Job listened. He said:

“I have not departed from His commands but have treasured His word in my heart” (Job 23:12)

David listened. He said:

I take joy in doing Your will, my God, for Your law is written on my heart.” (Psalm 40:8)

Oh, the joys of those who... delight in doing everything the Lord wants; day and night they think about His law. (Psalm 1:1-2)

Jeremiah listened. He said:

Your words are what sustain me. They bring me great joy and are my heart’s delight, for I bear Your name, O Lord God Almighty. (Jeremiah 15:16)

The Psalmist listened. He said:

Oh, how I love Your law! I think about it all day long. (Psalm 119:97)

How sweet are Your words to my taste; they are sweeter than honey. (Psalm 119:103)

Jesus’ rebuke to Satan serves also as an admonition to us:

“People need more than bread for their life; they must feed on every Word of God.” (Matthew 4:4 - Jesus was quoting from Deuteronomy 8:3)

Is it not awesome to think that the infinite, limitless God of eternity should stoop to speak to you and to me? Should this not be adequate to prompt our full attention to His Words?

But still there is more. Why should we hide His words in our hearts and give Scripture memorization priority in our lives?

God's Word is *powerful*.

*...the Word of God is full of living power....
(Hebrews 4:12)*

*...the worlds were framed by the Word of God.
(Hebrews 11:3, KJV)*

The Lord merely spoke, and the heavens were created. He breathed the word, and all the stars were born. (Psalm 33:6)

God's Word *grows faith*.

...faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. (Romans 10:17, NKJV)

God's Word *encourages* and *gives hope* in a finite and evil world.

*Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. They give us hope and encouragement...
(Romans 15:4)*

God's Word *trains in righteousness*.

*All Scripture... is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right.
(II Timothy 3:16)*

God Speaks

He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. (II Peter 1:4, NIV)

God's Word *incites joy*.

And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. (I John 1:4, KJV)

If Your law hadn't sustained me with joy, I would have died in my misery. (Psalm 119:92)

God's Word *speaks peace*.

Great peace have they who love Your law. (Psalm 119:165)

God's Word is our *weapon* for use *in spiritual warfare*.

*Be strong with the Lord's mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the Devil... Use every piece of God's armor to resist the enemy in the time of evil, so that after the battle you will still be standing firm. (Each piece of God's armor can be identified as having its root in the Word of God, but the Sword, the only piece of the armor that is used for both defense and offense, is specifically identified as such.) Take... **the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.** (Ephesians 6:10-11,13,17 - emphasis added)*

God's Word leads us to *assurance of eternal life*. John said:

I write this to you who believe in the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life. (I John 5:13)

God's Word is *eternal*. Jesus said:

"Heaven and earth will disappear, but My words will remain forever." (Matthew 24:35)

It is imperative for us to recognize and appreciate the enormous Treasure that our great God has made available to us mortals, communication from beyond this world, actual Words from Deity. Paul said to the Thessalonians:

And we will never stop thanking God that when we preached His message to you, you didn't think of the words we spoke as being just our own. You accepted what we said as the very Word of God — which of course, it was. And this Word continues to work in you who believe. (I Thessalonians 2:13)

and to Timothy:

All Scripture is inspired by God.... (II Timothy 3:16)

Peter told us:

...you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own

interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (II Peter 1:20-21, NIV - emphasis added)

This book is written to challenge and encourage you to start hiding these living, powerful Words in your heart, by memorizing them and fixing them in your mind and soul, not just a verse here and there, but building verses into chapters and chapters into books so that your soul and spirit may absorb the full impact of their meaning in context.

They are not just idle words for you — they are your life. (Deuteronomy 32:47, NIV)

And now I entrust you to God and the Word of His grace — His message that is able to build you up and give you an inheritance with all those He has set apart for Himself. (Acts 20:32)

Remember:

As for God, His way is perfect; the Word of the Lord is flawless. (II Samuel 22:31, NIV)

There has not failed one word of all His good promise. (I Kings 8:56 NKJV)

**Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in this chapter are taken from the New Living Translation*

***Lawrence O. Richards, It Couldn't Just Happen (Word Publishing - 1987, 1989) p. 8*



Appendix A

HELPS AND HINTS ON HOW TO MEMORIZE

(Warning: If you haven't already begun memorizing longer portions of Scripture, you may find the detail in this chapter a little overwhelming to just read through "cold turkey", without being able to apply it to Scripture you're actually working on. So, if in reading, you find yourself starting to lose it, just put it aside for now, but remember that it's here in case you want to browse through it later.)

In this chapter we have tried to cover a broad spectrum of ideas so you can pick and choose to find out what works for you or at least give you a springboard for your own creativity.

When to Memorize:

1. Some people like to plant a portion of Scripture in their mind just before going to bed. This gives them an opportunity to meditate on it before dozing off to sleep. They feel that by sleeping on it the Scripture penetrates their sub-conscious for better absorption giving them a better start than if they began during the day. They review

during the day, and when they're ready to add another verse, they memorize it also in the evening. When they have conquered that one, they review the two together before dozing off and so it goes.

2. People with busy schedules sometimes feel that Sunday is a day already dedicated to worship and is a good time to concentrate on memorizing God's Word. They are thus able to devote a block of time to it in a way that may not be possible during the week. This has definite advantages but there are other factors that should be considered.

If Scripture memorization is confined to Sunday, it would be important to review during the week, because without it, efforts could be lost in the interim. Also, it's as we meditate on God's profound truth and constantly review, that the powerful Word has opportunity to consistently bathe our souls and feed our spirits. This is the secret of retaining Scripture and is a beautiful part of the journey. If you limit your time only to Sunday, and this aspect is overlooked, you could miss much of the joy and blessing inherent in the application.

A Sunday schedule may also be more adaptable to younger minds than to those that are further along life's journey. When the years start stacking up on us, we seem to do better with shorter, more frequent sessions as opposed to the more concentrated, less frequent approach. But this is a decision that only you can make for yourself after experimenting and determining your own capabilities.

3. There are those who like to work memorization into their work-a-day world. They tend to pursue it at times when their hands may be busy, but mental concentration is not a requirement. Memorizing and reviewing then becomes a normal part of their day, while they are grooming, working around the house or in the yard, driving the car or lying in bed. (More about this later.)

Ways to Memorize:

Of course, it's convenient to memorize directly from your Bible, but you may find the binding wearing out prematurely by opening it frequently to the same place. Also, you may need something more versatile because a book may not be easy to tote around or keep track of when you're pursuing a busy schedule.

1. 3x5 cards offer a handy alternative. Professionals suggest that there is special significance in writing out the Scripture yourself as part of the memorizing process. However, you can type it, if you prefer, or copy it directly from your Bible (enlarge it if you like) then cut it down and tape it to your card.

You then have a handy little item to use in any way that fits your agenda. Some who use this method tape the card in a place where they spend most of their time. Then they review as they move to other areas. Others tie it on a string around their neck or just carry it around with them, so it's always handy for reference. You can put it by your phone to review while listening through all those recorded messages, stash it in your pocket or purse to

consult as you wait for appointments, or place it on the car visor for use when you're detained in traffic. It fits into almost any situation and in almost any corner of your work area.

As you progress and add to your cards, you can keep them in a box or secured with a rubber band handy for review.

2. When I started memorizing, I liked to be able to view an entire chapter so I enlarged it on a copy machine to a size that could be easily seen by my weakening eyes. Copies were then taped up in places I frequented. One went on my bathroom mirror, handy for when I put on makeup, others went on my bedroom mirror and by my kitchen sink, so no matter where I was there was a handy reference. They also served as good reminders to get back to memorizing if I got sidetracked. Should the Sandman give me a hard time, and I was reviewing during the night, they were handy for prompting when I got stuck and just had to know the next word before morning. A friend copies her Scripture as above, and then reviews it with her husband on their morning walks.

3. Others like to type out their chapter, double-spaced, on a full sheet of paper and work from that. They find it helpful to work line by line, so they can review more carefully. One gentleman who uses this method, lies on his bed in the evening to go over his Scripture. It must work well because he always quotes word perfect. (I understand his wife also hears him reciting while lolling in the bathtub.)

4. If you find yourself trying to hurriedly scan a passage of Scripture before racing off to work, you may want to try this: Rather than breezing through a quick portion that you'll probably forget by the time you get to the car, try, in the short time you have, to just meditate on one verse or part of a verse. Jot it on a 3x5 card and take it along with you. As you have breaks in the day, memorize just that short passage while you're waiting on the phone, eating your lunch or at other times. It will take a while for you to remember it without looking, but it'll soon become a permanent part of your thinking. As you add to it, little by little, you'll be surprised at how fast verses grow into paragraphs and paragraphs into chapters.

How to Begin:

The Chinese say: A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. And it follows that the journey continues one step at a time. This is the way to memorize Scripture. Take that first step and then continue on one small step at a time.

Don't look at a chapter and say, "I'm going to memorize this chapter." Look at the first verse and say, "I'm going to memorize this verse".

We've alluded to the futility of trying to eat an entire elephant at one sitting. Remember the "one bite at a time" part? When you begin memorizing, start with a bite-sized chunk, a verse, a sentence, a phrase — whatever is comfortable for you. Stay with that portion until you have it thoroughly in mind. It may take you part of a day, an entire day, a week or more. Just never go on to your next bite until you've completely "digested" the one prior.

When this is accomplished, work on your next segment until you know it well. It's best to begin a new verse when your mind is fresh, then after you've memorized it, say it along with the verse(s) you've already learned. Then comes the review. Start from the beginning and say the first verse, adding the others you've memorized until you can quote them all together with no fumbling or stumbling. As we have said so often, you'll soon learn that memorizing Scripture is made up of *rote repetition, meditation and constant review*.

So begin your base by memorizing the first bite sized chunk. Then continually build on it always making sure that you know the previous ones well, before progressing on to the next. We will discuss the review later in this chapter, but I mention it here because it is a basic part of memorizing.

Jogging Your Memory:

As you memorize, you'll occasionally experience what we call "stone walling" when all of a sudden your mind just goes completely blank. You can be going along quoting something you know well, but suddenly you find yourself treading water. This happens to even the most experienced professionals. So what do you do? Frequently, all it takes is a word or sometimes even just a letter to trigger complete recall. There are built-in methods of self prompting that can help jog your thought processes when this happens.

I should warn you, though, this next section may be a little confusing to just read through without a working background to associate it with. There is a lot of detail, but don't let it confuse you. If you find yourself getting bogged down, just put it aside for a while to review later when you have something tangible to apply it to.

Remembering Proper Sequence:

Noting the Alphabetic sequence can help:

I Peter 2:13 - *Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men.* I could never quite get it straight: was it “every *authority instituted* among men” or “every *institution authorized* among men”? Remembering the alphabetic sequence took care of it. The “A” of *authority* comes *before* the “I” of *instituted*: ...*every authority instituted among men.*

I Peter 2:15 - *For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men.* It's not always easy to remember whether it's the “*ignorant talk of foolish men*” or “*foolish talk of ignorant men*”. But it's easy to remember that verse 13 is in alphabetic sequence but the reverse is true in this verse. Alphabetically, the “I” of *ignorant* comes *after* the “F” of *foolishness* thus: ...*the ignorant talk of foolish men.*

II Peter 1:5 - *For this very reason, make every effort to add to your Faith Goodness; and to goodness, Knowledge; and to knowledge, Self-control; and to self-control, Perseverance; and to perseverance, Godliness; and to godliness, Brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.* At first this long list may be intimidating, but notice: the first letters of the dominant nouns walk you up and down the alphabet: F,G,K - S - P,G,B. And it's easy to just add *love* on the end.

Jude 14 - *See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of His holy ones.* I had trouble remembering whether it was “*See, the Lord is coming with thousands of his holy ones*”, or “*Look, the Lord is coming with thousands of his holy ones*”. Here you have an alphabetic sequence of consecutive letters. **S-T:** *See, the Lord is coming...*

Just plain logic is often adequate:

Psalm 1:1 - *Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.* Note the verbs - *walk - stand - sit*. A natural sequence.

Establishing Meaning and Order of Importance:

You may find it helpful to review the passage thoroughly to establish the meaning. Then the sequence may become clear.

For example in Colossians 3:18 - 4:1 the sequence is: wives/husband; husbands/wives; children/parents; fathers/children; slaves/masters; masters/slaves. This series could be difficult to keep in correct order without making some association between them.

It's helpful to realize that family relationships are more important than those outside the home. Also, the one who is to be submissive is mentioned first. The most important part of the family is the *wife/husband* relationship, and the wife is to be submissive to her husband. Therefore, the wife is mentioned first

and then the husband. Next in importance is the children who are submissive to their parents. Then come the slaves who are answerable to their masters.

But if you look at I Peter 2:13-17, you will find the sequence of importance here is reversed and Peter, instead of starting with the most important relationship, builds up to it. The responsibility of Christians toward governmental authority is addressed first, then their relationship to non-believers, believers, and to our Lord, then back to governmental authority.

Visual Association:

Visualization is another way to spark your memory especially if you are having difficulty with the sequence of a long list.

The method described here is based on ten words that serve as a key. Once you remember the key, the association follows, almost automatically. The following is a suggested key, but you may develop your own very easily if you so choose...

one	-	run
two	-	zoo
three	-	tree
four	-	door
five	-	hive
six	-	sick
seven	-	heaven
eight	-	ate
nine	-	dine
ten	-	den

To illustrate its use, let's apply my *vivid* imagination to the beatitudes.

The first beatitude is:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:3)

The first key word is *run* which tells us this is number one, the *first* beatitude. So visualize a man *running* toward heaven. He is very lean and lank like most runners. However, the further he runs, the worse he looks. In fact he looks very *poor*, thus the first beatitude, *Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

The word *zoo* goes with *two*. So for the second beatitude visualize your favorite *zoo* creature, try an elephant crying with his mate lying beside him, and a zoo-keeper trying to comfort him, thus:

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." (Matthew 5:4)

The third key word is *tree*, so for beatitude number *three*, you may visualize a group of monkeys in a *tree*. All of the monkeys are close to the trunk of the tree and quite secure except one that is very shy or *meeek*. He keeps edging out toward the end of the branch until suddenly the branch breaks off and the monkey crashes into the dirt (the earth). Hence:

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5)

Appendix A

In review, you remember the key word for *one* is *run*, hence the runner and the association with *poor* and *heaven*. Number *two* key word is *zoo*, so you visualize your *mourning* zoo animal being *comforted* by the zoo-keeper and the association with those who mourn being comforted. Number *three* is *tree*, so you think of your *meek* monkey in a tree getting his mouthful of *earth*. Thus the meek inheriting the earth. I'm sure by now you have the idea and do not need more of my imagination.

Visual associations are included here to be used only in specific instances and are not recommended for general use. Although books have been written promoting this process as a method of memorizing longer portions of Scripture there is a danger involved when it is utilized. Such visualizations can be helpful for prompting when needed, but if they dominate the entire process, you could become hopelessly entangled in a legalistic endeavor. The meditating and delighting part of memorizing Scripture as laid out in Psalm 1 is a vital part of the blessing. If you replace the Scripture with visual associations, you could find yourself meditating on visualizations instead of the Word and thus inhibit the work of the Holy Spirit. Always remember, it's not just memorizing the words that is important. The joy and power of Scripture is realized only as you give the Holy Spirit opportunity to impress the powerful Word on your mind and soul through meditation and heart involvement. It is through meditating and delighting in God's Word, His written

communication to you, that your communion with Him, the Author, flourishes into precious intimacy.

Other Helpful Associations:

Words Beginning With the Same Letter:

I Peter 2:23 - *Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly.* I found myself getting confused in quoting this verse until I noted the consecutive words starting with “J”. Then I knew if *judges* and *justly* were not in consecutive order, I was not saying it correctly.

I Peter 3:17 - *It is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.* Note all the words beginning with “I”.

Rev 2:13 - *Yet you remain true to My name.* Note the two consecutive “Y’s” and two consecutive “T’s”.

Acronyms:

Although acronyms do not *always* contain vowels, they frequently do, and whenever I see a word beginning with a vowel I look for an acronym, especially if it’s in a place where I’m having trouble.

I Peter 2:18 - *Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect....* The first three letters of the last three words, spell WAR (Not a great association “meaningwise”, but “wordwise” it’s a good reminder.)

Appendix A

I Peter 3:13 - *Who is going to harm you....* The first letters of the first three words spell **WIG**.

Psalm 91:2 - *I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress."* Acronym: **HIM**.

Rev. 1:10 - *On the Lord's Day, I was in the Spirit and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches."* It's difficult here to keep the wording verbatim because it can go so many ways. e.g. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day and behind me I heard a loud voice...." To keep it straight, I think "**onion**" and remember that the verse starts with "**On**" and that the next two clauses start with "**I**".

I Peter 2:1 - *Therefore rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit....* I worked for doctors for 14 years, so whenever I get to this point, I think, "doctor - **MD**": **Malice and Deceit**. (Not intended personally for doctors, please.)

Revelation 1:4 - *Grace and peace to you from Him who is, and who was, and who is to come...* Although *grace and peace* are common blessings in the epistles, there are other blessings such as *grace, mercy and peace* and *mercy, peace and love*. Here again is a medical acronym to help keep it straight. **GP**: **Grace and Peace**.

Revelation 1:6 - *...to Him be glory and power forever and ever!* The same acronym applies. **GP**: **Glory and Power**.

Repetition of Words:

I Peter 3:9 - *Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult... - evil, with and insult are all used twice.*

I Peter 3:18 - *For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.* The word *For* that begins this verse and this sentence can be used as a reminder that this word is repeated several times in the context.

Jude 14-15 - *Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of His holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."* The words, *thousands, all, and ungodly* are all used more than once. Also note the acronym, **TUT: Thousands Upon Thousands.**

Miscellaneous Associations:

I Peter 2:11 - *Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world....* After *Dear friends*, there is a string of words starting with vowels: *I urge you as aliens and...* (Even though the "Y" of *you* does not technically qualify, the other two letters of *you* are vowels.) You also have three words in a row beginning with "A" which is quite unusual: *as aliens and....* When I get to this verse I always think, "Oh, yes, this is where we have all the vowels."

Appendix A

Psalm 1:4 (KJV) - *The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.* I frequently misquoted this verse until I noted that *wind* ended with the letter “D” and that the next word - *driveth* started with that same letter. Then I knew, if I didn’t have back to back “D’s” I wasn’t saying it correctly.

I Peter 4:8-9 - *Above all, love each other.... Offer hospitality to one another....* It’s very easy to think *love one another* as it is in 1:22 but take note that *love* ends with the letter “E” and the next word starts with the same letter. It is E - E: *lovE Each other*. In the same way you know that *hospitality is to one another*. O - O: *tO One another*.

I Peter 5:1 - *...a witness of Christ’s sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed....* Notice: *who also will*. Here are two words starting with the same letter separated by a word beginning with a different letter (often a vowel). I call this a *sandwich*. In this verse it’s easy to think, “who will also share”, or omit the “also” altogether, but if you tuck away in your thinking that there is a *sandwich* here, it helps to keep it straight. **WAW: Who Also Will.**

Occasionally you’ll run across a *sandwich* of the same word separated by another word as in Jude 15 mentioned in the last section: *thousands upon thousands*.

I Peter 2:21 - *To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you leaving you an example, that you should*

follow in His steps. Sandwich: you leaving you. (Also notice the repetition of the word you in this sentence.)

For a specific verse that you may be having problems with, it may help to break it down by noting the first letter of each word, and perhaps even making an association, as a sentence, with them. This is very detailed and would only be useful in a short section where you were having significant problems.

First Word and/or Letter Associations:

By noting specific words or even letters that start a verse, you can often make associations that are helpful when needed. (You will notice from the personal examples given here that I was memorizing in the King James Version for the Psalms, but in the New International Version for I Peter.)

Psalm 25:7 - ...*for Thy goodness sake, O Lord.* When I get to *good-ness* in verse 7, a light goes on to remind me that verse 8 starts with the word, *good: Good and upright is the Lord....*

I Peter 3:2 - ...*when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.* The word *your*, near the end of verse 2, reminds me that verse 3 starts with this same word: *Your beauty should not come from....*

Unlike the narrative in the New Testament, each verse in a Psalm may be a complete thought in itself independent of other verses. It is, therefore, often

helpful to have a prompt for the first word or even letter in each verse to start you off. The illustrations given here may be difficult to just read through, so you may want to scan them for now, but take note that they are here for reference if you need them, especially if you are memorizing in the Psalms.

Psalm 103: For this Psalm, I am aware that the first 2 verses start with the words *Bless the Lord* and the next three start with the word *Who*. Remembering the first word or two in verses 6-10 is not difficult either: *The Lord; He; The Lord; He; He*. Then for verses 11-19, I have noted just the first letter of the first word in each verse. These fall easily into three groups of three: F-A-L, F-A-F, and B-T-T. Then the last three verses begin with the word *Bless*. And that is the Psalm.

This next illustration is not at all easy to follow, but it worked for me, and if you can find your way through the maze, it may at least give you an idea of how you can use a similar line of thinking to your advantage. (You may find it helpful to have your Bible open to Psalm 25 as you scan through it.)

Psalm 25:18 starts with the word *Look*. *Look upon mine affliction and my pain...* I use this word as an indication of how the next three verses begin, but in reverse. The last letter in *look* is “K”. Verse 19 starts with the “K” sound. *Consider mine enemies....* Verse 20 starts with “O”, but then the actual “K” comes into play. *O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed....* Verse 21 has a double prompt. Because “L”

is the first letter of the key word *look* I'm alerted that this verse starts with "L". But also when I get to the word *let* in verse 20, it registers that this is the word which begins verse 21. "*Let integrity and uprightness preserve me...*"

Now, are you thoroughly confused? If you were memorizing a similar passage, I would hope it might make a little sense, but if not I'm sure it was mind boggling to try plowing through it. Hopefully, enough has filtered through to at least give you the idea of what is intended.

Review:

It is said that the three most important factors to remember in buying real estate are: Location! Location! Location! Similarly, the three most important factors in the memorization of Scripture are: *Review! Review! Review!* I can't emphasize this enough. Unless you establish a sound base, meditating and reviewing thoroughly as you go along, it will be like trying to build a house without a foundation. At some point it'll come crashing in on you. The secret of retaining what you have learned lies in constant meditation and review. This is all part of the blessing. We have found no quick and easy methods, nor do we recommend them.

When starting a chapter, it's important to consistently return to the beginning for review. However, once you get well into the chapter or book, it will be helpful to vary the places you begin, and even to recite by paragraph going backwards (if you know what I mean).

As we have mentioned, some authorities maintain that the first five minutes of concentration are the most productive. By starting in different places, you exercise your mind in different areas while it is fresh. This will initiate a more uniform memory pattern. If you start all reviews at the beginning of the chapter, there is a tendency to become very familiar with the first part of the chapter or book while never thoroughly grasping the last part.

When you are well into memorizing a book, it often becomes difficult to review all of the previous chapters each time you review. One solution is to review one or two chapters progressively each day of the week and then do a comprehensive review of the entire book (or as far along as you have memorized) only once a week.

As mentioned in another section, some like to review just before dozing off at night, and when they awaken early. Those who suffer from insomnia have long hours to fill and often enjoy great blessing as they review, pray, and meditate on Scripture they have memorized. If they use 3x5 cards, they usually keep them next to their bed for handy reference.

Others find it helpful to write or type out their Scripture for review. This immediately points out any misquotations they may have picked up along the way, but it also helps to impress the text more firmly in their minds.

When preparing to present a passage in public, or when I want to *polish* it, I like to quote it along with an audio tape or CD. This immediately identifies areas that need work. Incidentally, if you're quoting to a group, no matter how well you may know the Scripture passage, it's important to have someone close by to prompt you in case you need it, or else have your Bible

handy to refer to should you find yourself “stone walling” in the middle of it.

In Conclusion:

Be sure to keep your eye on the goal. Don't ever forget that the joy of memorizing Scripture is getting to know the Author not the legalistic exercise of just knowing the words. As you memorize God's powerful Word, letting it fill your mind and thrill your soul, you'll find your daily walk enriched and your focus sharpened in new and exciting ways. Divine insight is then perpetually available for you to tap into *for teaching the faith and correcting error, for resetting the direction of (your) life and training (you) in good living.* (II Timothy 3:16, Phillips)

If the Lord tarries and we go into persecution as many predict, the Scripture you have memorized will be an invaluable reservoir to draw from, not only for you, but also for family and friends as well as for others around you.

Never forget that this is a *forever* investment - *“The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of the Lord stands forever.”* (Isaiah 40:8) God's Word stands forever! What you memorize from the Word is *eternal* truth. It will go with you right on into eternity. We know of several avid memorizers who have already gone on ahead and are now probably enjoying quoting their Scripture to the King of kings.

Again, if you've tried to read this chapter without having actually started on your journey of memorizing Scripture in context, you probably found it quite confusing, but don't let it throw you. Just put it aside for now and

Appendix A

when you find yourself in need of some practical pointers remember that it's here. If you haven't done it already, the most important thing for you to do right now is just dive in and get started. Be sure to go as slowly as you need to and *always remember*, the most important thing is....

above all - enjoy!



Appendix B

TEACH YOUR CHILDREN!

*“Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds...
Teach them to your children....”*

(Deuteronomy 11:18,19)

Are you convinced that your children should be starting to systematically hide God’s precious Word in their hearts, but are a little unsure about how to proceed? Then this chapter is for you! In it we’ve tried to anticipate some of your questions as well as address some of the more academic aspects. But it’s not easy to cover such a broad spectrum of data without becoming a little tedious. So again, if you find yourself getting bogged down, you may want to break it up into *bite-sized* portions. Now, on to the challenge!

Does it Matter Which Bible Version We Use?

Yes! As with adults, it’s important for your children to memorize a valid translation of the Bible. Sometimes people ask if they should have their children use *The Children’s Bible*. I would never recommend this for two

reasons. *The Children's Bible* is a paraphrase of the Bible and would be much like memorizing a story book. Also, children are not going to be children forever, but their reference to Scripture will always be a "kids thing" if their reference is associated with *The Children's Bible*. It won't be something they can relate to as adults. You want them to build a repertoire they can use and relate to throughout their entire life. So it's very important for them to memorize a recognized translation that will be a point of reference throughout their lifetime.

The translation you use in your church or in your family would probably be a good choice. But if you're in doubt, be sure to discuss this with your pastor.

How Do I Introduce the Idea to My Kids?

Your attitude toward the project is of prime importance. Your children will be as interested as you are and attach the same importance as you do. Be enthusiastic and be sure you yourself don't consider it a "heavy" project, because they will pick up on this very quickly. If, for whatever reason, you're not completely convinced that memorizing Scripture is an enormous joy and privilege, take this to the Lord and ask Him to make His Word exciting to you and to give you His mind in presenting it to your children. Other chapters in this book should be a help in this area.

Children are not likely to accomplish too much if you just hand them a Bible and tell them to memorize. It will require your setting time aside for them. It may even cut into some of your pet projects. But time is one of the

most valuable investments you can make in your children. And the investment of time is what it will take if you are to pass on to the next generation the most valuable of all assets, that of making the Holy Word of our Holy God a significant part of their lives.

It would be good if you memorized along with them or if you made it a family project. If it's a part of your home schooling agenda, you will have a built-in schedule, but guard against making it too legalistic. Separate it from their academic studies. Teach them that reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic will prepare them for the secular world; but memorizing God's Word will take them on a spiritual journey that will not only prepare them for their walk with the Lord in this world, but will be an investment that they can take along with them into the next. Jesus said in Matthew 24:35:

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away."

Emphasize the fact that it is *God's Holy Word* they are making a part of their lives; that the God of the universe cares about them and has given them a book to let them know how much He loves them and wants them to be happy in the world He created for them; that He wants to guide them through this life and to help them avoid the hurts and heartaches that come from following our own sinful ways.

As we have mentioned elsewhere in this book, it was the father in the orthodox Jewish home who worked with his sons as they memorized the Torah. It was the

father who was accountable to the Lord for preparing the next generation by being sure that the Word of God was thoroughly planted in the hearts and minds of his children. In some cases today, it's not possible for a father to assume this responsibility, but it is preferable if at least some of your children's sessions could be with their father. If he can't be actively involved, he can at least be an encourager by listening enthusiastically to the endless repetition of hearing his children quote as they learn.

Just one more thing. In introducing a memorization program to your children, you may not want to dump the whole load at one time. Whereas some children will run with the idea, others will be intimidated by the thought of memorizing an *entire chapter* and even a workbook may seem like an enormous project to them. You know your children. You may want to just introduce the general idea that you're going to start memorizing God's Word without revealing the entire plan. Then you can just take a verse at a time or hand out just a page from one of our workbooks without revealing the entire project. This way you can have them build their way along letting them discover for themselves that they are making progress on an entire chapter. You may remember this mother's testimony from a prior chapter:

At first our children, then 6 and 8, were a little reluctant. They didn't see how in the world they would ever be able to memorize a whole chapter. But we took it a verse at a time, and they began to see that it was possible. In fact, my husband and I hold the children back from memorizing more

quickly simply because it is harder for us. And it is amazing how the Lord has given us all insight into what we are memorizing. The children are always reminding us of some verse from the chapter and applying it to a situation. It gives our family a common language when we are encountering a problem and looking to the Lord for a solution. (Ed: They had completed the first chapter of James at this writing and went on as a family to memorize the entire book.)

Where Should We Start?

Pray about this to see where the Lord might lead you. As a general rule, I would recommend that children start with a short chapter. It's important for them to be able to say in good time, "*I have memorized a whole chapter!*" This will encourage them to go with something longer next time. If you pick a long chapter, it's easy for them to get discouraged before completing it. A short Psalm might be considered, like Psalm 1, Psalm 23, 100 or 121.

Okay! What about Rewards?

I don't understand the reluctance of some people to give rewards to children as incentives for memorizing Scripture. I think it's an enormous misnomer to imply that memorizing Scripture is such a *spiritual thing* that rewards shouldn't be used as incentives. Paul told us to run the race in this life to *win the prize*. Why shouldn't children be encouraged with the same challenge?

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. (I Corinthians 9:24)

The Lord has strewn Scripture with encouragements and rewards for those who remain faithful to His calling. The second and third chapters of Revelation are laden with them!

“To him who overcomes I will give the right to eat from the tree of life....”

“He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.”

“To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.”

“To him who overcomes and does My will to the end, I will give authority over the nations... I will also give him the morning star.”

“He who overcomes will... be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and His angels.”

“Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of My God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from My God, and I will also write on him My new name.”

“To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with Me on My throne....”

Are you not challenged and encouraged by these promises of rewards that the Lord has for those of us who keep our eyes on the goal and are *overcomers* in this life? Obviously our God expects us to be spurred on to greater heights as we anticipate earning them. Why shouldn't we apply this same principle in teaching our children about spiritual things? We can emphasize the reality of awesome eternal rewards as we challenge them with a memorization program strewn with the more tangible here and now kind.

And just a few more examples:

Paul said as he faced his imminent execution under Nero: *I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me — the crown of righteousness that the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that great day of His return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to His glorious return. (II Timothy 4:7-8, NLT)*

God blesses the people who patiently endure testing. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him. (James 1:12, NLT)

Talking to the elders who obey the exhortations in verses two and three of I Peter 5, the apostle

promised: *And when the head Shepherd comes, your reward will be a never ending share in His glory and honor. (I Peter 5:4, NLT)*

Regarding Rewards:

Guard against too much pressure. Set short-term goals and long-term goals. Time limits may be helpful for accomplishing short-term goals, but go slow and test the waters to learn their capabilities. Be sure to keep long-term memorizing within comfortable parameters. Watch for burnout especially in the early stages.

Schools and Sunday Schools use stars and stamps with good success. Today, fancy stickers are big with kids. Visit Christian book stores and/or stationery departments to find out what is available in charts and stickers. (If necessary, you can draw up a simple chart.) If your children have special interests, perhaps you can find stickers with this theme.

Put the chart up in a prominent place and when your child is present, use it to point out his accomplishments to other family members and friends. A contest may be fun if you have more than one child or friends to work with. But be sure that it doesn't get out of hand as children have different learning capabilities. Adjust for age and any other differences that may come into play.

When the pre-determined number of stickers is earned for a short term goal, plan a special treat. It doesn't have to be anything big possibly even a family outing that the child has wanted or a special date with mom or dad. A *surprise* of something you know he or she would enjoy could also work well. But whatever

you choose, make sure the child understands clearly what it is so he can enjoy the pleasure of anticipating it. A misunderstanding at this point could be a major catastrophe.

Achieving a long-term goal should be rewarded with something very special even if it requires *squeezing* the family budget. Few things will bring greater dividends for your investment. Make it a big occasion with as much fanfare as possible. You could plan a whole day or even a weekend around it to be sure it is out of the ordinary, something they will enjoy and remember. (If possible, include other people in the celebration.) This will also encourage them to look forward to accomplishing their next long term goal.

If you can arrange for your children to quote to your adult Sunday School class, Bible class, in church, even at family gatherings or dinner parties, it will give added importance in their minds. This will associate the experience with adults, and it will also help establish the Scripture in their minds. We all prepare more carefully when quoting to others, but be sensitive to your children's temperaments. Some will be delighted with such projects while others will be intimidated. Be sure not to pressure those who may not be comfortable with quoting in public.

Kids love to play school. Encourage older children to work with younger siblings and help them to learn what they have accomplished. This will have double significance in that it will be a subtle review for them as well as instructive to their siblings.

Take frequent breaks for review when needed. Don't let it be drudgery. Watch for ways to make it light

and fun. Be alert to times that may be used for learning as a family. For example, memorizing Scripture together can help pass the time on longer trips. These hours can also be used to initiate individual reviews for the entire family to appreciate.

Don't be afraid to go with your own ideas. If they don't work out, you can always shift gears. Trial and error is a great way to learn. Remember, if you don't try it, you'll never know if it works.

Be Prepared for Spiritual Warfare!

As we have emphasized in other chapters, once you commit to memorizing Scripture, you'll be a target for enemy assaults. Don't be discouraged by them, just expect them! Know that you must be making a dent in his territory or the enemy wouldn't bother with you. No one knows the power of the Word of God branded on the heart and mind of a believer, and especially a child, better than the prince of this world. You can be sure it's not on his agenda for it to be a priority in your life or that of your children. So be on guard for his treachery.

As well as trying to sabotage your attempts in getting started, there will undoubtedly be other attacks along the way directed at frustrating your efforts. Later in this chapter, you'll read about taking breathers, but be on guard for interruptions of another nature. Keep in mind that the enemy is always looking for ways to distract and discourage those who are busy building an arsenal against his wiles.

At some point, you may suddenly realize that your children no longer view the experience of memorizing

with the enthusiasm and interest they once enjoyed. Somewhere along the line you may see it has been replaced with an aura of drudgery and oppression.

If this happens, realize that the enemy is at work. He is not at all happy with what you are accomplishing and is trying to divert your focus from the eternal to the temporal. Take it to the Lord. Have friends and prayer warriors pray with you about it. This is an attack that must be resisted on the spiritual level.

Always remember that memorizing the Scriptures is a journey to be *enjoyed*. It should be a delight and a precious time with the Lord in which we give Him opportunity to speak to our soul and minister to the needs in our life. This applies to children as well as adults. Such concepts instilled in the heart of a child will be a resource for him to draw from throughout his entire life. Again, remember, it's not the exercise of memorizing the words that is important. Be sure to teach your children that joy lies in getting to know and communicate with the Author, the One who is Himself, the *Living Word*.

Build Slowly:

When you begin, don't look at a chapter and say, "We're going to memorize this chapter". Look at the first verse and say, "We're going to memorize this verse". Be sure your child knows that first verse as well as his own name before going on to the next. Writing it out is helpful. When he has memorized the second verse, have him say it with the first until he can quote them both together without hesitation or fumbling and then go on to the third. You'll soon see verses building into chapters and chapters

into books. If you're using one of our workbooks, it will walk you through the steps, and you can just dole the pages out one verse at a time.

Professionals tell us that the first five minutes of learning is the best time to establish something in our mind. So if your child is ready for a new verse, it's best for him to spend the beginning time on the new verse rather than begin with a review of what he has learned. Then after he has learned that verse thoroughly have him go back and review it with the prior verse, then the paragraph, and then begin at the first of the chapter.

It's very important for your children to build slowly and carefully because if they don't, at some point everything will come tumbling in on them. Don't try to pass lightly over a difficult area, or it will always be a problem. Break it up into small portions and work on each portion until they have it well in mind before taking another little bite, eating the proverbial elephant one bite at a time.

Teach Your Children to Pray for Divine Insight:

Be sure you don't approach God's Word as you do any of their academic studies or any other book they may read. Teach them that the Bible is a precious gift given to them from the One who made them and who loves them in a very special way.

Explain to them that because the Bible is *God's Book* and not like other books, it's important for us to ask God's Holy Spirit to explain it to us so that we can grasp the meaning He wants us to apply to our thinking and our life. Have them ask Him to make His Word

real and exciting to them, to make it live for them, and vital to them. Have them ask the Lord to teach them, convict them, cleanse them, guide them, and encourage them as they learn to walk in His ways. Have them pray with the psalmist:

Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in Your law. (Psalm 119:18, NLT)

Be sure they understand that God's Word is *truth*; that they can trust what it says and know that the One who wrote it has never failed to keep His Word. Tell them that it's important for them to build their life and their values around it.

In His own words He tells us:

*"I, the Lord, speak only what is true and right. I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is good and leads you along the paths you should follow."
(Isaiah 45:19; 48:17, NLT)*

Teach Them to Meditate and Delight in the Word and Review Constantly:

In Psalm 1, David reveals his formula for happiness and blessing. It is meditating and delighting in God's Word day and night. This is the heart and soul of Scripture memorization. As your children memorize a "morsel" of truth, teach them to think about it whenever their mind is not busy in other areas. Like when they're doing their chores, riding their bikes, or lying in bed. Teach them to

let it linger in their minds throughout the day and into the night and to get into the habit of filling those idle moments with truth they have assimilated.

As they learn to meditate and delight in Scripture they have memorized, they'll begin a process that will be precious to them throughout the remainder of their lives. Each passage will remain with them to recall again and again as little by little they build their own personal repertoire and enlarge their basis of meditation.

Remember the command that the Lord gave to the children of Israel when they were about to enter the Promised Land. As we have alluded in prior chapters, this was surely an exhortation, not just for them, but for all of God's children for all time.

*“Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them... Fix these words of Mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorposts of your house and your gates, so that as long as the sky remains above the earth, you and your children may flourish in the land the Lord swore to give your ancestors.”
(Deuteronomy 11:16,18-19, NIV; 20-21, NLT)*

Could the Lord have stressed any more clearly the need for rote repetition, meditation, and constant review as it applies to memorizing and retaining Scripture and passing it on to subsequent generations? As your children

review and rethink the truth they have memorized, they will be blessed time and again by its powerful message. In this way, Scripture becomes branded on their hearts and minds for frequent and convenient reference.

Take Breathers :

Don't hesitate to take breaks when they are indicated. There will be times when your children may, for whatever reason, slow their memorizing to a crawl. Give them this freedom. There will be times when they stop memorizing altogether for a while for a prolonged review, just to take a breather, or because of some disruption in their lives. Let it happen. Don't feel guilty or discouraged about this. Encourage them to use the time to meditate and delight on what they have already learned. The main thing is that they just don't stop completely. Let them take the pause they need and then begin anew.

It doesn't matter how slow they go or how many breaks they may take just let that be part of the journey not the end. And don't let the enemy tempt you with discouragement. If they don't accomplish according to your expectations, who cares? Let them take their time and go as slowly as they need to, but let me repeat: Above all encourage them to enjoy the experience.

What About Burn Out?

It's impossible to apply rigid rules for memorizing God's Word. It seems reasonable that we should do everything possible to make memorizing Scripture fun, and a normal part of life for children. Should this approach

meet resistance, we should not become discouraged or give up easily.

You have probably heard stories about the “Hanoi Hilton” where prisoners of war in Vietnam were kept in unspeakable conditions. It was a common practice for the prisoners to pool Scripture they had memorized so they could all have access to as much as possible to sustain them during these difficult years. Although they were not allowed to communicate verbally, they developed a code, whereby they could communicate and relay Scripture by tapping on their cell walls, sweeping the floor, sliding their sandals, even coughing, spitting and sneezing to code.*

In one case, a prisoner who was said to have contributed the most was a man whose mother had forced him to memorize Scripture as a child even though he hated it. This mother must have been tempted many times to give up wrestling with her son about memorizing, but she apparently persisted. As a result, when he faced this crisis in war, the Lord honored her efforts. The Holy Spirit used the Scripture hidden in his heart to restore his faith and comfort him in dire circumstances. Not only was it a saving factor for him, God also used it to minister to the needs of fellow prisoners struggling with the unspeakable conditions they had to contend with.

Who knows what your children may encounter in their lifetime? The Word that you plant in their young minds as children will be in their hearts and memory throughout their lifetime. One young woman writing a letter of thanks to her pastor wrote:

I remember during those years, before I was 13, a number of incidents that helped form my

religious concepts. The Sunday School teacher's smiles who encouraged me to read and memorize the Scriptures. *Those Scriptures are the ones that today are the most vivid in my memory.*

Even if they rebel against the Lord and wander far from Him, your children will not escape the Word already planted in their minds. The Holy Spirit will always have this to use as a resource on their behalf, whether your loved ones walk *with* the Lord or *away* from Him. So pray continually for wisdom and emphasize the joy and privilege aspect of memorizing the Word, always making it as interesting and applicable as possible.

At What Age Should I Start ?

As mentioned previously, Orthodox Jewish fathers began teaching their sons to memorize the Torah at age three. There are significant reasons why it's important to introduce a child to God's Word as early as possible. Even three years old is not too young.

1. Three years old is a tender age when your child will probably learn his greatest lessons about life. He is learning to exert his independence so you are starting to reason with him and explain what life is all about. (Why do you think the Lord placed the word "why" so prominently in their vocabulary?) You are teaching him about right and wrong and about the existence of absolutes that our God has established for his protection.

This is the ideal time to introduce memorizing Scripture as a natural part of his life. He is learning about

everything else. Now is the time to let him know that God's Word is an important part of learning and an important part of life. There will be no other time in his entire existence when he will be more open to it than in these innocent years. Take advantage of them. They will soon pass.

2. The Lord seems to have given the greatest capacity for learning to children around the age of three. The English language is one of the most complex in the whole world. Learning it is a fete that would stymie most of us adults yet a child of three usually speaks it fluently. This is why we must not let these brief years slip through our fingers, these years when our children have such unique capabilities. Having learned to communicate in the words of men, they should be introduced to the Words of their loving, Almighty God.

3. Not only is Scripture more easily memorized when a child is young, once it is learned it is easily retained in a way that is not possible when it is memorized in later years. Once he learns it thoroughly, the Scripture becomes part of his life like the English language.

People in their later years struggle continuously to retain Scripture they memorize. What they memorized as a youngster is part of them and is easily recalled. With absolutely no review I (now 70 years old) can recite poetry I learned in elementary and high school. Sometimes a long forgotten strain will "tickle my ear-drums", and I find myself singing a song, verbatim, that I may not even have thought of since my youth. Yet Scripture I learn today, I must consistently review to retain.

4. Starting in younger years, your child will not have to unlearn the negatives of this world in order to embrace the Lord's way and the Lord's Word. At this time of life, the Holy Word can be planted in an open, trusting mind that Jesus said is an example of those who are greatest in His kingdom.

We are making a grave mistake if we let other things take priority over teaching our children to memorize God's Word. The all-important truth of the Word is readily received into the sensitive, responsive heart of a *little* child. It is important that we start *before* the evil one has opportunity to seduce with his subtle ways, hardening gentle hearts to the things of God.

5. Scripture memorized in these young years will prepare your child for the battery of evil forces awaiting him in the outside world. He will soon have to face on his own those who have little or no regard for his Lord and yours. Give him the protection he needs, a resource he can count on not only now, but in the years that lie ahead.

Is Memorizing Scripture Really Important for My Children?

The world of a child is full of new and wonderful things. It is a time of learning. Ideally, it is a time when a child subtly becomes aware of what life is all about in the shelter and instruction of a loving environment. It is a time when innocence gives way to experience. We invest heavily in our children. Our time, our love, our money, our patience, our wisdom, everything we have and are goes

into our endeavor to bring about all the good things we want for them. We try to cover all the bases possible to equip them for life as an adult. From this time of nurturing and instruction, they will go directly into the world to face whatever their lifetime will hold. What is ahead for your children? What does the future hold?

Again we look at Moses' admonition to the children of Israel as they faced a perilous future. Surely, this is our Lord's best advice to us as we look warily into the future of what could be ahead. Are we giving proper attention to this aspect of our children's training? The years are speeding past. The exhortation of our Lord is clear:

*Fix these Words of Mine in your hearts and minds...
Teach them to your children.... (Deuteronomy
11:18,19)*

*"You must let little children come to Me — never
stop them! For the kingdom of God belongs to such
as these." (Mark 10:14, Phillips - emphasis added)*

* Howard and Phyllis Rutledge, *In the Presence of Mine Enemies* (Pyramid Publishers for Fleming H. Revell Company, 1975) pp. 58, 67



Appendix C

NOT BY BREAD ALONE

(Testimonies)

“Kevin! That’s wonderful!” I shrieked excitedly. I knew then that all was worthwhile. If no one else in the whole world responded to the challenge of memorizing Scripture, Kevin had. The Lord was working.

Yes, Kevin was the very first. In this chapter you’ll read about him and some of the others who entered into the joy of memorizing Scripture in context when the Lord first began *Sword of the Spirit Ministries* as well as just a few from some of those who have followed in their footsteps over the brief years we have been in existence. (We have also included a couple of long-time memorizers.) It has been a joy to see how the Lord has wonderfully blessed lives and families as His people have sought to know Him by giving the memorization of His Word priority in their lives.

Kevin’s start in life was far from ideal. He was born to a second generation alcoholic father who was also addicted to other drugs. As a child, he was physically

abused by his parents and sexually abused by a neighbor. He began smoking cigarettes at age 11 soon graduating to marijuana and on to cocaine by the time he was 18.

As a father himself, with three little boys, Kevin was dealing drugs out of his home, and doing whatever else was necessary to support his consuming habit. But he was soon brought up short! Realizing the warped home life that his children were facing on a daily basis, his wife's grandparents threatened to have them taken away from him unless he agreed to go to a Christian counselor. This was the turning point in Kevin's life. Unable to face the thought of losing his boys, he went to the counselor for help. It was this man of God who introduced him to the life-changing Savior who forgave his past and gave him the prospects of a bright and glorious future.

Kevin now owns a roofing business and has grown in the Lord as he has worked hard to pull his world together. But Satan doesn't easily relinquish his hold on those who have served him well. Life for Kevin has been a constant challenge.

It was while I was busily handing out Scripture verses to Sunday morning worshipers that I noticed Kevin headed my way beaming from ear to ear. After a warm hug, he gently ushered me out of the line of traffic, jabbering excitedly the whole time. But I just couldn't make any sense of what he was trying to communicate. He was obviously excited about something, but the garbled, disjointed chatter wasn't casting too much light on the situation.

Finally, bursting with pride, he beamed, "I need a little help, but I can say it okay." Finally! The light dawned!

I realized that Kevin had been working at memorizing the verse of Scripture I had distributed the previous week. *Now I* was excited! The Lord had torched a hungry heart through the entrance of His Word, and I hugged him gleefully.

Besides the miscellaneous verses handed out at church which got him started and which he learned to quote verbatim, Kevin has memorized Matthew 7 and much of Colossians. He has commented, “When things start getting rough, I always think, I better get back to memorizing Scripture.”

Leslie was a 25 year old homemaker who started memorizing Scripture in context shortly after delivering her first baby. Her testimony:

I always knew I should memorize Scripture but could never get around to it. Then came the challenge in church for all of us to memorize a chapter. It was suggested that if enough people participated, the church family would have the epistles preserved in their hearts and minds should we ever lose our printed Bibles. I decided that I would “do my part” and was assigned the first chapter of II Timothy. But when I had memorized the first chapter, I couldn’t stop. Within the next six months, I finished the entire book.

As a result of memorizing Scripture, I began noticing some marvelous things happening in my life. For instance, when I listened to my pastor’s sermons, the Scripture I had already memorized would affirm and sometimes even “flesh out” what he was saying.

Also, I've noticed an enormous change regarding my relationship to my heavenly Father. I no longer think of Him as I did before, defining Him by my own thoughts of what He must be like. Now I see God as He describes Himself in His Word. I thought when I started to memorize, God would immediately point to areas in my life that needed work. Instead, He forced me to focus on the foundation of my salvation, His great love, His forethought, and sacrifice for me, determined, in His grace, before the creation of the world.

My quiet time has become meaningful and exciting. Seldom did I gain very much from just *reading* the Bible, and as a result did not consistently observe a devotional time. Now, it's as if God's Spirit woos me, calling me to come and learn.

I memorize a little at a time by writing one or two verses of Scripture on a 3x5 card each day. By carrying this card around with me, I have a handy reference until I can recite it correctly. Then I say it all day long while going about my business of changing diapers, folding laundry, doing dishes, showering.... The next day, I write the next verse(s) on another card, and repeat the process, reciting from the beginning for the rest of that day. (I have found that writing the Scripture out helps me to memorize it.)

I've also learned to watch for miracles, because God *blesses* our efforts to memorize His Word. One particular miracle happens all the time. When I don't understand a verse or passage, I ask the

Father to bring understanding. He is so *faithful*. One day just *out of the blue*, the *light* clicks on in my mind and heart. God answers and the meaning is clear. It may happen while I'm waiting for a red light or when I'm lying awake at night. Often it comes when I'm not even thinking about it. But God is *always* faithful to enlighten me.

In miraculous ways, my Lord uses me, a very *fallible, imperfect* vessel, to speak His words to His people. I was asked to share II Timothy at a retreat last fall. Although I had rehearsed well enough, I was very nervous, and my delivery in practice was pretty monotone. But when I began speaking to the audience, it was as if the words just flowed out of my mouth, without even referencing what was in my mind and heart. It was God! As I continued, I began noticing the moving of God's Spirit over the congregation. Tears flowed and a hush swept over the assembly. God was speaking through me. It was nothing that I could *ever* do on my own.

I could go on and on. The excitement of watching God work and speak through His Word is too wonderful. And the blessings of hiding God's Word in my heart are too great to enumerate. Since finishing II Timothy, I have memorized Philippians and John 1:1-18. The Book of Ephesians is my current project. I can't get enough! There's so much to learn and so much of God that I want to know.

I pray that God will use His Word in my heart to speak to those who do not know Him; that I will be able to *give an answer for the hope* that is in

me using God's own words. Should we face persecution, I have peace knowing that I won't have to answer with my own words. God can speak His words through me.

All scripture is God-breathed, and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (II Timothy 3:16)

May God use His word to equip me.

That was six years ago, and at this writing Leslie has just delivered her third child and in addition to the Scripture mentioned above, she has to date finished memorizing the books of Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. Today, Leslie writes:

I have found the memorization of Scripture a challenge to my mind and a comfort for my soul. In this way I truly feel that I can know the Father by memorizing His love letter to me. I have benefited greatly from this discipline. I notice that consistency breeds consistency in this particular discipline. The more I memorize, the more I want to memorize!

Warren is a 56-year old farmer, a husband, father and grandfather. He has memorized Romans 1 and the 176 difficult verses of Psalm 119. As well as being the longest chapter in the Bible, Psalm 119 is probably one of the most difficult to memorize. Each verse is basically

independent of the others. There is not the narrative or composition that some find easier to grasp. Also, the many terms applied to Scripture are difficult to keep straight (law, testimonies, commandments, precepts, statutes, judgments). Anyway, Warren decided that if he memorized Psalm 119, this would prove to his own satisfaction that any chapter could be conquered. Warren tells us:

I liked the challenge of memorizing by chapter because I had never done it before. Growing up I learned random verses, but that was completely different. When reading a book, we don't read a few lines here then skip and read a few more words or a couple of lines somewhere else. Solid continuity is important in any text. That's the way Scripture was written. That's the way it's meant to be read and memorized, in order for us to understand it.

Memorizing it really makes the Word come alive. I understand it in a way I couldn't otherwise. It has helped me to grow spiritually. I wish someone had prodded me to do this years ago.

The Bible says we should *pray without ceasing*. Memorizing the prayer of Psalm 119 has given me a *mind set* of being in an attitude of prayer. Also, the more I get into it the more thankful I am for what I have. (Ed: Warren is a quiet, reserved gentleman but is always glad to share Scripture he has memorized with the church family and has quoted Psalm 119 on several occasions to different congregations.)

Norris began memorizing by chapter when he was 70 years old. Now, at 85 a husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, he can quote Matthew 5, 6 and 7; John

14, 15, 16 and 17; Colossians 1; I Corinthians 13; Isaiah 53; Psalms 1, 23, 84, 103 and 121. His testimony:

The Lord had been convicting me for several years before I decided to start memorizing Scripture. He kept reminding me of the Psalmist's words: *Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee. (KJV)* I knew this wouldn't be in the Bible if it didn't mean what it said. Although *memorizing* was the last thing in the world I wanted to do, I finally gave in.

I found that memorizing the Word deepened my spiritual walk. When I read Scripture, I skim over it. It doesn't penetrate. But when I memorize, it penetrates because I have to know what is being said in order to remember it.

At my age it's a constant exercise in discipline to retain what I memorize. I go over all the Scripture I have learned once a week in order to remember it. If I skip, I forget. The six verses I memorized for confirmation when I was twelve years old have never left me. I never have to review them because they are part of me. At this stage of life, it's a challenge to memorize and then to retain it once I have learned it.

My advice to anyone is to *get going now*. Don't put it off. No matter where you are in life, the longer you wait the harder it will be to memorize and the more difficult to remember. Take it from one who knows. (Ed: Norris also says, "We need churches that memorize Scripture in this day and age more than ever. A church that memorizes is a church that is going places.")

Leslie, is another young mother and housewife (not to be confused with the other Leslie mentioned earlier in this chapter). As a mother of two pre-schoolers and pregnant with her third child, Leslie had trouble getting started on her memory program, for reasons every mother knows. But before delivering her baby, she had conquered the first two chapters of Colossians and went on to complete the entire book. She says:

When first challenged in church to memorize Scripture by chapter, I was interested though not convinced I could do it. And I was afraid of failing. Then I heard another young mother just like me, reciting a chapter in a Sunday service. (Ed: She heard Leslie whose testimony appears in the first part of this chapter.) God's Word came through with power in a way I had never before experienced. Seeing that she had successfully responded to the challenge gave me the confidence I lacked. I knew I needed this power in my life. I wanted the Lord to speak through me to others the way He had touched me through her presentation.

The first chapter of Colossians was a favorite of mine so that's where I started memorizing. But I was not prepared for how the Lord would bless. Wow! It wasn't hard at all. I enjoyed doing it. It was exciting. It was powerful. My biggest problem became getting the verse(s) written down on my 3x5 card and posted on my microwave. The memory part was fun.

In days past, I carried a great load of guilt and sense of failure when I missed my daily Bible study.

Now God's Word is in my heart and with me all the time. I can review it wherever I am. It's often at random times, in bed or in the car, that the Lord gives me new and exciting insight.

I will never forget my first public presentation. Looking out into the congregation I saw people leaning forward on the edge of their seats as I recited Colossians 1. God spoke! I knew it wasn't me. It was Him. I left the platform elated and exhilarated at having seen my Lord use *my* mouth to glorify Himself through His Word.

Many told me afterwards, "I could have listened to you all day." At the time I thought when a pastor reads a long passage he loses his audience long before he finishes, but it's obviously different when memorized Scripture is presented from the heart.

The Lord spurred me on to memorize the second chapter of Colossians, then the third, and the fourth. It took me almost a year to complete the entire book. Through this experience, Scripture became more personal and more powerful in my life. It is now part of me and vital to my very existence.

By getting to know Paul better through his letter to the Colossians, I no longer think of him as *Saint* Paul, only 'Paul'. I believe he lived every day just like we do. His life was significant only because he was sensitive and obedient to the Holy Spirit's leading.

Although I had read and studied Paul's letter to the Colossians numerous times, I didn't sense the depth of truth hidden in its pages as when I

memorized it. I realize now it's impossible in this life to grasp the full meaning. I know that if this one letter is all the Scripture I have, it could feed me spiritually for the rest of my life.

I wish people knew what they are missing by not memorizing God's Holy Word. Reading and studying it is great, but there is so much more. I have found that memorizing in context opens up a whole new depth of meaning and application to my daily walk.

That testimony was written about one year after Leslie began memorizing. She has recently delivered her fourth child and from the time of that testimony until the present, she has also memorized II Timothy, Philippians, most of Ephesians, Philemon and has recently completed the book of Hebrews. The Lord beautifully blesses Leslie's public presentations as she quotes the Word from her heart. Here, now, is her recent testimony:

I had been a Christian for many years when I began memorizing Scripture by chapter and book five years ago. I have grown spiritually more than I ever dreamed possible! The Word of the Lord has truly become the foundation of my faith. Before I began memorizing, my overall understanding of the Bible was somewhat limited. Now, I have a built-in cross reference in my heart and mind that enriches and deepens the meaning of Scripture to me. I encourage anyone who desires a closer walk with the Savior to begin by memorizing Scripture in context. You will not be

left hungry! Praise the Lord Jesus Christ for His wonderful Word.

Like mother, like daughter. Now we have the second generation of memorizers. Leslie's daughter, *Shannon*, writes:

I started memorizing Scripture with my mother when I was five years old. I am now ten and I memorize on my own! It has helped me be more truthful. Because I know the Word, the Holy Spirit can convict me easier.

My whole family has been affected by God's Almighty Word. Thanks to my family, and especially Jesus, I have come to know the Lord. I have a stronger walk with God because of memorizing Scripture. I think everybody can have a better walk with God if they memorize it. I will memorize Scripture my whole life. How about you? God loves us all!

These are testimonies from some of the very first people who rose to the challenge of memorizing Scripture by chapter and book when it was first presented. All, except Norris, were first fruits of *Sword of the Spirit Ministries*. Following are just a few testimonies from others who have followed in their footsteps, as well as one who has been a *long-time* memorizer.

Leslie and her husband, Phil, now have a small group of Scripture memorizers who meet weekly in their home. Here are a few testimonies from that group. Some of them are comparatively young Christians whose time in the world was rooted in drug and alcohol abuse,

demonic involvement, and new age rationale so they have had significant baggage to deal with.

One in this group wrote:

I love the Lord, because He has heard (and now hears) my voice and my supplications. (Psalm 116:1, Amplified Bible)

These words are now, literally, written on my heart and my mind to reflect on whenever and wherever I need to be reminded of these words from God.

One of the most precious gifts God has given me in the three years I've known Him is encouraging me to memorize His written Word. Something powerful (in the spirit realm) happens to me when I memorize a whole chapter in context. The Holy Spirit frees me, sometimes one word at a time, sometimes one verse at a time. It's like the hands of a clock ticking, we can't see them move with the naked eye, yet they move. So it is in my spirit, with incredible depth and insight, God's pure truth continually consumes the dross and permeates my very being. Hebrews 4:12 says it best:

For the Word that God speaks is alive and full of power — making it active, operative, energizing and effective; it is sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating to the dividing line of the breath of life (soul) and [the immortal] spirit, and

of joints and marrow [that is of the deepest parts of our nature] exposing and sifting and analyzing and judging the very thoughts and purposes of the heart. (Amplified Bible)

Thank you Jesus!

Another wrote:

When I heard the whole book of Philippians quoted at a presentation by *Sword of the Spirit Ministries*, I thought it was great and I was excited about memorizing, too. But I didn't do so good by myself and after awhile, forgot all about it.

Then my daughter and I went to hear Leslie also quote that same book at a group meeting in her home. I met some special people who made me feel right at home. It was so wonderful to hear the Lord's Word spoken. I remembered feeling the same as I had a few years prior. I knew that I wanted to be a part of this group of people.

When I was driving home, I prayed that the Lord would help me to be able to memorize and help me to know what to memorize. I was so excited I could hardly wait to get started. By the time I got home I knew the Lord had laid Psalm 139 on my heart. This was a psalm I'd loved ever since I first read it, years ago.

I wrote it all out and asked the Lord to help me keep it in my head. I know that without His help I could never have memorized those 24 verses in one week. I can't believe that I have memorized over 100

verses in about 3 months. The Lord is so faithful, and hiding His Word in my heart is the best blessing.

The Lord will help anyone keep His Word in their head and heart. All we need to do is ask. His Word is *living* and when we memorize it, it is for His glory. Thank you Lord!

And *another*

I had been under the loving conviction of God for many months regarding cigarette addiction. I had just about gone out of my mind trying to figure out how I could *desire* to do his will and still choose to serve this idol at the same time. My flesh was waging war against my spirit and I was becoming exhausted from the raging battle.

After reading a booklet from *Sword of the Spirit Ministries*, my heart was deeply touched and was so overjoyed I could hardly contain myself. I joined one of their memorizing groups and immediately memorized Psalm 23. What a promise and what a cleansing! What a journey!

Although I loved reading Scripture I didn't always know what to read. And what I was reading didn't seem to be sticking. I began memorizing James, but got discouraged because even though I loved it, I wasn't seeing any real changes in this storm that raged within.

That blessing was Psalm 6. It pierced my heart. It was as if my prayer was in the Bible. My body was secretly screaming with pain and I had worn myself out repenting. I immediately began to memorize it .

Every word was alive. It brought me to a depth of healing far beyond just deliverance from cigarettes. My body began to be restored from all the deception it had been fed, and all the damage that had been done over the years, both physically and spiritually. I began to take back all that was stolen from me by the enemy in every area of my life. I could actually admit all my fears to my loving Father through his own words in Scripture

There were many other factors and powerful Scriptures given to me from the Lord and others. And I was completely set free from this bondage, cold turkey, with no withdrawals. All by the power of the Word. God orchestrated it in a miraculous few weeks of my life in perfect sync of revival, perseverance, fear of the Lord, prayer, and the heartcry of His living Word written upon my heart

With this new challenge that can only be done with the help of the Holy Spirit, I know I'm in obedience as I meditate on His Word and continue to write it on my heart. No one and nothing can ever take it from me. His Word stands forever! Thank you, Jesus! I stand in awe of Your deeds.

Also from Phil and Leslie's group:

I am memorizing Psalm 119 in the Amplified Version. Although I had been using this Psalm in my devotional time for the past year, it began to penetrate my life in new ways when I began to memorize it. The strong emphasis on God's precepts and laws has made me determined to

stand strong on His Word in every situation. Even though we were strapped financially, I saw the need to give up clients who demanded that I compromise my Christian stand.

When my husband recently endured two heart attacks, I was rivetted to the Word for strength and assurance. (Ed: Leslie says that this lady is growing by “leaps and bounds”. Because she and her husband had served Satan’s purposes so faithfully in the past, he refuses to loosen his grip without a fight. She says she has found that victory has not come with prayer alone but that the Word is needed as an effective weapon in the demonic warfare they encounter.)

From *a retired pastor* and long-time memorizer (who now serves on the Board of Directors for *Sword of the Spirit Ministries*):

In the summer of 1970, when I was 51 years old, my wife, to whom I had been married for almost 25 years, lost her battle with cancer and went home to Glory. There followed a time of emptiness and loneliness. I battled with thoughts of self-pity and temptation. In an effort to control my thought life and bring it into captivity to Christ, I spent much time in God’s Word and began to memorize Scripture.

At first it was individual promises, or short familiar passages. Then I decided to try to memorize the whole book of Colossians. That was a transforming experience. I saw things in this book I had never seen before.

Having received such blessing for myself, I wondered if others might hear God's Word in a new way if whole chapters and/or books were recited with suitable expression and emphasis.

When I began reciting Scripture in context from memory, many came to me with comments such as:

"It made the Scripture come alive!" "I heard things I had never heard before." "The Word is so much more meaningful hearing it recited in context, than just reading it or hearing it read."

I am now 81 years old and continue to memorize to this day. I have memorized dozens of chapters, as well as entire books. (Ed: He has over 90 chapters in his repertoire.)

As a retired pastor, I would especially encourage anyone who teaches the Word of God to take time to memorize whole chapters and books.

From a *wife, mother and grandmother*:

When God graciously allowed me to attend a *Sword Of the Spirit* workshop, I heard the Word of God quoted from memory, by chapter and book. My heart was deeply moved by the power of the Word. I resolved to start memorizing starting with John 14.

Memorizing the Word of God, in context, has driven it deeply into my being and caused me to ponder, meditate and digest it rather than lightly skim over the words. It has become a precious encouragement as well as a tool.

Memorizing Scripture is the life blood of my Christian walk. It opens up the Word to my heart

as no other means can accomplish. It gives sustenance and rivets my heart to the Anchor so that I no longer drift. God uses it in untold ways to accomplish His purposes.

From another *wife, mother and grandmother* (79 years old at this writing):

When *Sword of the Spirit Ministries* introduced memorizing Scripture in context to our church, my heart responded. I had enjoyed memorizing poetry in school, Scripture also, as part of my training in Sunday School. Here was the challenge to memorize chapters! I committed to memorizing the first chapter of Acts.

After I had had open heart surgery, my doctor had stressed the importance of walking a few minutes every day. Since walking required only physical effort, I felt that exercising my mind, as well, would make that daily half hour more profitable.

I copied page one of Acts from my Bible and carried it with me as I walked. (It was much easier to hold a small fold of paper than a Bible.) Verse by verse I memorized and reviewed.

When I had page one in mind I copied page two. On that page Chapter 1 ended and Chapter 2 began, so I went on to memorize that often quoted chapter.

I'm now up to Chapter 14 and have quoted several passages in public. Although I didn't plan to memorize the entire book of Acts when I started, I now have that goal.

Here and There:

- I attended a *Sword of the Spirit* workshop last spring and just had to write to tell you that it has changed my life! I was spellbound to hear whole chapters and even books quoted from memory. I thought, "Maybe I could do that too!" I have to tell you that I have taken off, running, and am being so very blessed! My main time to memorize is on my daily walks. It's so neat because I can just feel the Word sinking deep into my very heart and becoming alive! I have completed John 15, Isaiah 53 and am starting Romans 8. Thank you so very much. I will be forever grateful.

- When first approached by the concept of memorizing Scripture in context, I wasn't sure how to respond. I read my Bible and knew some verses but to memorize whole chapters at a time seemed overwhelming. But I knew it couldn't hurt to try. So I called a friend and we decided to do it together. Once a week we get together to pray and memorize our verse for the week. Saying the words really didn't mean anything, but as we meditated and took each word into our hearts and claimed it to be true, the power of the Holy Spirit has become very evident in our lives.

As we continue to memorize, our faith also continues to grow and become bolder. This has become a very powerful way to strengthen our relationship with the Lord and we look forward to memorizing more of the Word.

Appendix C

- Finally mastered the 91st. Hooray! Now I'm going to memorize the first. (Ed: Psalm that is.)

- Ivy and I are still memorizing. We are now doing Proverbs 4 which strikes a deep cord within me to teach Ivy. I just love it. I have hidden in my heart Psalms 16, 20, 61, 91 and 92. I am currently working on Psalm 51. (I'm not trying to boast, but it just amazes me that I could do this much!! I know it's the Lord!) (Ed: Ivy is her 8 year old daughter)

- I am writing to thank you for the ministry the Lord has prompted you to carry out. The learning of Scripture by book and chapter has begun a blessing for a lifetime.

I have learned Chapters 5, 6 and 7 of Matthew, and God is opening little doors of deeper understanding each time I recite His Word. I had memorized these verses about 10 years earlier. However, after attending your seminar and experiencing entire books being quoted from memory, I knew that I had only memorized the words. This time I am learning to know the Author as you taught. We (myself, my wife and son) all learned Psalm 91 after receiving your workbooks last fall. My wife has begun learning the book of Philippians and is now in chapter 3. We are all learning Psalm 119, one verse a week. It will take some time, but we will keep you posted.

The blessings along the way have been numerous as God is so faithful to His Word. He

has brought to life verse 3 of Psalm 91, *Surely He will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence.* In many little ways He has directed our paths around little pitfalls of the world we live in.

Oh, that my ways may be established

To keep Thy statutes!

Then I shall not be ashamed

When I look upon all Thy commandments.

(Psalm 119:5-6)

That is our heart's cry to the Lord. Thanks for directing us to His Word. God bless!

- I just wanted to write you a note and say thank you for sending me some chapters from your book. I was really motivated and encouraged to start memorizing Scripture. I have memorized Psalm 23, Isaiah 53 and am working on Isaiah 54. What a joy it has been to do this and I was so convinced that I couldn't. I want to start on parts of the New Testament as the Lord lays them on my heart. I'm so excited and have been encouraging others to try it.

- I listened to you on TV in Richland, Washington a few weeks ago regarding memorizing Scripture. I want to say, "thank you", for blessing my life.

Every morning early I go walking for an hour. Since hearing you on TV I have started memorizing

Appendix C

Scripture. I have learned Psalm 121 and the first 12 verses of Ephesians 1. It is just like you said. The Scriptures have really been opening up to me more and more.

I'm really excited about this. I plan to memorize the whole book of Ephesians. I know I can do it with the Lord's help. Thank you again and God bless you.

- Memorizing Scripture has changed my life. Everything has changed. My prayer life has improved. It's rejuvenating my love for the Lord. I just can't believe how it's getting me excited about God again. It's like taking vitamins. You eat Scripture and it gives life to your bones.

- I'm on the 5th verse in Isaiah 53. *Slow!* Well, I'm in my 90th year. I'm determined with God's help, I'll make it!

....the Word of God is full of living power....
(Hebrews 4:12, NLT)

Forever, O Lord, Your Word stands firm in heaven.
(Psalm 119:89, NLT)

*You have magnified Your Word
above all Your name.*
(Psalm 138:2, NKJV)

