



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