

Bible Study for January 23rd & 25th

Memorizing God's Word

Many Christians look on the spiritual discipline of memorizing God's Word as something tantamount to modern-day martyrdom. How come? Perhaps because many associate all memorization with the memory efforts required of them in school. It was work, and most of it was uninteresting and of limited value. Frequently heard, also, is the excuse of having a bad memory. But what if I offered you one thousand dollars for every verse you could memorize in the next seven days? Do you think your

attitude toward Scripture memory and your ability to memorize would improve? Any financial reward would be minimal when compared to the accumulating value of the treasure of God's Word deposited within your mind.

Memorization Strengthens Your Faith and Ministry

Want your faith strengthened? What Christian doesn't? One thing you can do to strengthen it is to discipline yourself to memorize Scripture. Memorizing Scripture strengthens your faith because it repeatedly reinforces the truth, often just when you need to hear it again.

On the Day of Pentecost (the Jewish holiday being celebrated when the Holy Spirit first came to dwell within Christians), the Apostle Peter was suddenly inspired by God to stand and preach to the crowd about Jesus. Much of what he said consisted of quotations from the Old Testament (see Acts 2:14-40). Although there's a qualitative difference between Peter's uniquely inspired sermon and our Spirit-led conversations, his experience illustrates how Scripture memory can prepare us for unexpected witnessing or counseling opportunities. But if these verses aren't hidden in our hearts, they aren't available to use.

Memorization Supplies Spiritual Guidance and Power

The psalmist wrote, "Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors" (Psalm 119:24). Just as the Holy Spirit retrieves scriptural truth from our memory banks for use in counseling others, so also will He bring it to our minds in providing timely guidance for ourselves.

When Scripture is stored in the mind, it is available for the Holy Spirit to take and bring to your attention when you need it most. That's why the author of Psalm 119 wrote, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." (verse 11). It's one thing, for instance, to be watching or thinking about something when you know you shouldn't, but there's added power against the temptation when a specific verse can be brought to your mind, like Colossians 3:2 – "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

Memorization Stimulates Meditation

One of the most underrated benefits of memorizing Scripture is that it provides fuel for meditation. When you have memorized a verse of Scripture, you can meditate on it anywhere at any time during the day or night. As you look for portions of Scripture to memorize, you might prefer to select verses on a particular topic where the Lord is working in your life right now. If your faith is weak, memorize verses on faith. If you're struggling with a habit, find verses that will help you experience victory over it.

Legislators' Weekly Bible study meets each Tuesday (*except following a Monday holiday*) and Thursday in Capitol Annex Room 436 from 12:00-12:30 pm. It is the same study both days to allow flexibility for everyone's committee schedules.

Tips on Scripture Memory

- A. Write out the verses on a sheet of paper or index cards.
- B. Draw picture reminders to trigger your memory of key words in the verses.
- C. Memorize the verses perfectly, word for word with each reference.
- D. Find someone who will hold you accountable for your memory work and will review verses with you.
- E. Every day, review some of the verses you have memorized and meditate on them.

Meditating on God's Word

One sad feature of our modern culture is that meditation has become identified more with non-Christian systems of thought than with biblical Christianity. But we must remember that meditation is both commanded by God and modeled by the Godly in Scripture. So, let's define meditation as deep thinking on the truths and spiritual realities revealed in Scripture for the purposes of understanding, application, and prayer. The kind of meditation encouraged in the Bible differs from other kinds of meditation in several ways. While some advocate a kind of meditation in which you do your best to empty your mind, Christian meditation involves filling your mind with God and truth.

For some, meditation is an attempt to achieve complete mental passivity, but biblical meditation requires constructive mental activity. Worldly meditation employs visualization techniques intended to "create your own reality," and while Christian history has always had a place for the sanctified use of our God-given imagination in meditation, imagination is to be the servant to help us meditate on things that are true (Philippians 4:8). Furthermore, we link meditation with prayer to God and responsible, Spirit-filled human action to effect changes.

How then do we meditate Christianly?

- Select an appropriate passage and choose the verse(s), phrase(s), or word(s) that impresses you most.
- Repeat each verse or passage in different ways, emphasizing different words each time. Thank deeply on the truth that flashes into your mind each time you repeat it.
- Rewrite the verse or passage in your own words.
- Ask yourself questions about the verse or passage. (Does it reveal something about God? Something you should pray about or make a decision about? Something you should do for the sake of Christ, others, or yourself?)
- Ask yourself what God would have you do as a result of your encounter with this part of His Word. After your meditation, you should be able to name one (or more) definite response(s) or action(s) you will make because of what you have read.
- Pray as you read through the text. This will submit your mind to the Holy Spirit's illumination and intensify your spiritual perception.
- Don't rush through the biblical text. Read less Scripture, if necessary, in order to have adequate time for meditation.

Applying God's Word

The Bible promises the blessing of God on those who apply the Word of God to their lives. The classic New Covenant statement on the value of integrating the spiritual with the concrete is James 1:22-25:

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. ²³For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: ²⁴For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. ²⁵But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

Pithy and powerful is Jesus' similar statement, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17).

Despite the difficulty and spiritual opposition, are you willing, at all costs, to begin using your mind "in a disciplined way" to feed on the Word of God "for the purpose of Godliness"?

This study adapted from chapter three of *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* by Donald S. Whitney.