

Memorizing God's Word

By: Bobby Jencks

Getting Started

Memorization is one of the most difficult of the spiritual disciplines because it requires daily attention. In order to maintain a regular routine of scripture memory, you need a strong motivation to help you persevere in your discipline.

Therefore, you must begin with prayer. Beg God for an insatiable desire for his word, and do not stop praying that prayer. Everyday, before you labor to hide God's word in your heart, begin your time with a short and sincere plea that God would supernaturally give you a desire to memorize his word.

In your time of prayer, ask God to open your eyes to the immeasurable value of reading and memorizing his word. Perhaps you already know many of the promises and benefits of memorizing the scriptures. Then you should go before God to help you overcome your unbelief in those promises, so that you would have a deep urgency to carryout this endeavor.

I had attempted many times in the past to memorize Scripture, but I had failed miserably every time. It wasn't until I started praying this prayer that God granted me the desires of my heart. He gave me an unquenchable hunger for his word that has never faded.

Then humble yourself before God, and admit to God all of your inadequacies in memorizing and being faithful to your spiritual disciplines. I confessed to God that I am not able to memorize nor am I able to be faithful to this discipline without his help. There was a time in my walk with Christ that I did not have a daily time of devotion, nor did I have any concept of what the spiritual disciplines were meant to do. But I did have some desire in me to be closer to God, and I knew that the spiritual disciplines were a means to help me draw near to my God.

You must find accountability for encouragement, mutual up-building, and to challenge one another. I did not become successful in any of my spiritual disciplines until I found an accountability partner who memorized scripture with me. We started in the book of James and we memorized one verse a day. We would meet once a week, and we would check up on one another daily through text messages to ask where we were in our memorization. Accountability was a key element to my success in memorization.

You should set a realistic goal for yourself. For example, you will want to find a book to memorize that you really love, but it shouldn't be too long. Most people start with James, Philippians, 2 Timothy, or Jude. Once you find the book that you want, you should decide how many verses per day that you want to memorize and set aside a specific amount of time to memorize every day. Then you will want to determine how many verses are in your book of choice and determine how long it will take to memorize that book as a means of setting an "end date." Make sure to add a week or two in order to account for unexpected life situations that may prevent you from reaching your goal. Then you are ready to start.

Encouraging Scriptures (emphasis added)

In these passages of scripture take note of the promises that God has associated with his word. I have added this section to show you these promises as a means of encouraging you to memorize God's word. Below I have italicized the sentences that correlate with the act of memorization, and I have underlined the promises of living according to his word. Afterwards, I also include some reflections that I gleaned from these three passages.

"Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. *This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it.* For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:5-9 ESV)

How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.

With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments!

I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes!

With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth.

In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches.

I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways.

I will delight in your statutes; *I will not forget your word.*

(Psalm 119:9-16 ESV)

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. “For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall make a name for the LORD, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.” (Isaiah 55:10-13 ESV)

Memorization is a command from God. He knows that we are prone to wonder away from him, so God has commanded that we always meditate on his word so that we do not forget his commandments.

Memorization is a means by which we obtain success. Those who forget God’s commandments will lead themselves into ruin and destruction, but those who remember God’s commandments and keep them will have good success in whatever they do.

Memorization is a means of purifying our hearts. God alone is able to change our hearts, and he primarily uses his living word to accomplish this work by the Holy Spirit.

Memorization is a means of helping us draw near to God. The word of God is also the primary means by which God reveals himself to us. In Ephesians 5:1, we are commanded to imitate God. How are we to imitate God? We must know him intimately. If we do not know God we cannot become more like him. Also, those who do not know God will perish because of their lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:1-3,6).

My Personal Reasons for Memorization

Memorization has changed my life. God commands that I continually meditate on his

words, and as a result of disciplining myself to memorize daily, God's words have transformed every aspect of my life.

Memorization has informed and directed my prayer life. Now when I pray, I do not need to use my own words to pray for someone or some specific situation. Instead, I allow God's words to flow from my heart concerning every circumstance. I do not need to think about what I will pray, I just pray in accordance with God's word.

Memorization has given me wisdom in pastoral counseling. Whenever I am faced with a difficult situation or conflict, God's words guide me through every trial. As a result, I feel confident to face almost any situation knowing that I have God's wisdom to direct me.

Memorization has blessed my marriage relationship and given me wisdom to love my wife as Christ loves the church. Because of my sinful heart and evil desires, there have been times when I have not desired to love my wife. But God's word has been a source of great power for me to continue loving when I am not capable.

Memorization has given me a deeper passion and love for God. God's loving kindness and wondrous works are recorded on the pages of scripture. As I meditate on those things, I cannot help but feel an overwhelming love for the God who has first loved me.

Memorization has greatly increased my knowledge of the Bible and the gospel. There is no doubt that I have gained a greater understanding of the scriptures because I know the verses word-by-word. Whenever I am reading, I can instantly make connections, and I am able to think of a whole book at once and consider themes and important topics mentioned throughout.

Memorization has given me new patterns of thinking because it has renewed my mind. God has changed my desires to match his own. And I pray that God continues to give me holy ambitions rather than allowing me to pursue any of my own selfish desires.

Memorization has equipped me to fight against sin and temptation. Whenever faced with a temptation, the sword of the Spirit is always available for me to fight the good fight of the faith. Indeed, when Christ was faced with temptations from Satan himself, the word was Jesus weapon of choice.

Memorization has empowered me when evangelizing. The world follows the prince of the power of the air, and his ways are deceptive and crafty. As a result, there are many evil

philosophies that control the world we live in. If we want to effectively fight those world-views, we must equip ourselves with the truth of God's word, and when we speak, we must speak as though speaking the very words of God.

Memorization has equipped me to teach others and make disciples. Whether I am teaching in a class setting or meeting with someone one-on-one, I am better equipped to guide people's hearts to the truth because I know God's word intimately. I can share with people my own testimony of how God's specific words have changed my heart and made me more into the image of his Son.

Memorization is accomplishing in me the purpose for which God sent his word into the world. The purpose of God's words is to bring him glory. And Jesus said, "By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and prove to be my disciples" (John 15:8).

My Memorization Technique

First, I will choose a small paragraph or section of scripture which is usually 5 verses or sentences. For the sake of this explanation, I will explain this technique using 5 verses, so this will not be complicated. Let's use Hebrews 10:19-25.

I will read the passage out-loud and attempt to understand the main point of that passage. I simply ask questions about the text. For example, in Hebrews 10:19-25, "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

He starts the passage by saying "Therefore" which clearly connects the passage to a previous point that he has made in the text. What is that point? The author also uses the word "by" to make a correlation between "the blood of Jesus" and "the new and living way". Why is that significant? The author uses the word "since" twice before he uses three commands to exhort the brothers to act in faith. What is the significance of using the word "since" in this way?

I do not exhaust the passage of Scripture with questions, but I ask enough questions to build a good foundational knowledge of the passage and to help myself understand what I am memorizing. What good is it if I memorize something that I don't understand? Also, when I make these types of observations, I am noticing patterns in the text and specific uses of words that the author uses to make his point. This significantly aids in the memorization process.

Then I begin the repetitive aspect of the memorization technique. I call this the 5x5 method. All of this is done out-loud.

Read all 5 verses 5 times. (Read while trying to concentrate on what you are saying. Try to understand the meaning of the words while reading, and try to read it exactly the same way every time you read it out-loud).

Read the 1st verse 5 times. Attempt to recite 1st verse without looking until you can do it 5 times.

Begin the 2nd verse and read 5 times. Attempt to recite 2nd verse without looking until you can do it 5 times.

Combine verses 1 and 2 and recite them 5 times without looking.

Begin the 3rd verse and read 5 times. Attempt to recite verse without looking until you can do it 5 times.

Combine verses 1 and 2 with 3rd verse and recite them all 5 times without looking.

Begin the 4th verse and read 5 times. Attempt to recite verse without looking until you can do it 5 times.

Combine verses 1,2 and 3 with 4th verse and recite them all 5 times without looking.

Begin the 5th verse and read 5 times. Attempt to recite verse without looking until you can do it 5 times.

Combine all of the verses until you can do it 5 times without looking.

The next day, you must review everything you attempted to memorize the day before.

Read the verses that you memorized the previous day 5 times then recite all 5 verses 5 times. Also, recite desired amount of verses from previous sections for further

solidification, but don't spend too much time and neglect the time you need for the next set of verses. You might discover that you will have to "rememorize" the previous section that was memorized the day before. Usually this takes very little time, and once you are able to recite the 5 verses 5 times, move onto the next section. Also, do not lack grace on yourself if you are unable to confidently recite all 5 verses perfectly the next day. Sometimes, certain passages will prove to be more difficult than others, and they will require 2 or even 3 days of memory work before they will be solid in your mind. Sometimes, you will be able to memorize 10 to 15 verses and recite them perfectly the next day. This depends on the complexity of the passage being memorized, and your familiarity with the passage. Personally, I do not move onto another passage until I have memorized my first 5 verses pretty solid. Then I will go to the next section.

Reciting and Upkeep

Recitation is very important. The goal of our memorization is to have the Word of God on our hearts and minds at all times. Therefore, it is important to regularly recite your verses in order to maintain what you have memorized. Try to find an accountability partner who would delight in helping you in your memorization efforts. Ask them to serve you by simply listening to you recite your scripture. If you do this, you will maintain what you have memorized, and you will be encouraging a brother or sister in the Word of God.

In addition, I will use the rest of my day to recite verses from previous sections or even the day before, so don't forget to keep the Word on my heart and on my lips throughout the whole day! This will really keep it solid! I will attempt to recite that chapter at least two or three times a week while I continue memorizing other sections of Scripture. At least once or twice a week, I will recite the entire book to keep it fresh in my mind.

If you have any questions just send me an email.

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Grace be with you,

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