



How many of you have ever in your life memorized at least one Bible verse? I would think that every last one of us have memorized at least one verse, even if we didn't try to do so. Some verses are so familiar to us that that we have them memorized even if we never set out to do so. Even young children "accidentally" memorize verses, usually through music. I memorized my first Bible verse my sophomore year in college, after I had been saved for about three years. No one ever challenged me to memorize Scripture before. I just decided that it would be a good idea. I didn't know where to start but for some reason--I think it was the Holy Spirit--I turned to Romans 12 and memorized the first two verses. I opened the only Bible I owned--a King James Bible--and proceeded to memorize this amazing passage.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

Since then I have memorized over 600 verses.

Last week I introduced you to brother Yun, one of the most influential leaders of the house church movement in China. When brother Yun was converted at age 16, there were no Bibles in his small, poverty stricken village. He prayed to the Lord and begged Him for a Bible. After a miraculous series of events, one day two men knocked on his door and gave him the Bible he had been praying for. He wasted no time in devouring its contents.

Every day from morning to late evening I read the Word of God. When I had to work in the fields I wrapped my Bible inside my clothing and took every opportunity to sit down and read. At night time I took my Bible with me to bed and laid it on my chest.

In the beginning, reading my Bible wasn't easy because I had only received three years of education. Furthermore, my Bible was in the traditional Chinese script, while I had learned to read simplified characters. I found a dictionary and painstakingly looked up one character at a time as I advanced through the Bible.

Finally I finished reading through the whole Bible, so I started to memorize one chapter per day. After 28 days I had memorized the whole gospel of Matthew. I quickly read through the other three Gospels before proceeding to the book of Acts and started to memorize it.¹

If you read my email, you know that this morning we are starting the Summer Scripture memory Challenge. I don't expect you to memorize the entire book of Matthew. I don't even expect you to memorize an entire chapter of the Bible, but here is what I do expect. I expect that if you are five years and older, you will memorize some Scripture this summer. We are not calling it a "challenge" for nothing! Why not set the bar high? If an uneducated, poor Chinese teenager can memorize 1071 verses in 28 days, could you memorize at least ten verses in 90 days? hopefully some of you will memorize much more than that but the goal is that every person five years old and up will memorize some Scripture this summer.

But my goal is not just for you to memorize Scripture for the next 90 days. My ultimate goal is for all of us, over the next 90 days, to create a habit of Bible memorization. I told you that I have memorized over 600 verses over the years, but it has never developed into a regular habit for me. It has all come in spurts. But if each of us could do some Scripture memory over the next 90 days, do you think it could become a habit for us?

So I want everyone to memorize some Scripture over the next 90 days and I would love to see the vast majority of us develop a habit of Scripture memory that will stay with us for the rest of our lives. But this is not an end unto itself. The ultimate goal of Scripture memory is transformation. This is what Romans 12:2 is all about: "but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." Through his Word, the Holy Spirit transforms us by the renewing of our minds. Do you think that memorizing Scripture could help you to renew your mind and be transformed? Most of you probably know that the word 'transformed' is the word 'metamorphosis.' Now the average butterfly is transformed within its chrysalis in a mere two weeks. I so wish that I could be completely transformed in two weeks, don't you? But God, in his mercy, has allowed us a lifetime of gradual transformation. And I believe that Scripture memory can, and should be, one of our core habits to help move this forward.

But you're probably not convinced yet. Some of you have already decided that you are not going to do this. "You can't make me memorize the Bible," some of you are thinking. You're right. I can't make you. But I would ask that you do two things. First, listen carefully to this message. Have an open mind and agree to let down your guard. And second, be prayerful as I speak. Ask the Lord if this is something that he wants you to do. Can you do that?

So without further introduction, here are ten reasons why every believer should create a habit of Scripture memory.

1. Scripture was written with the intent that it would be memorized.

What is the longest chapter in the Bible? Many of you know that its Psalm 119. Has anyone ever memorized this chapter? I know I haven't, but did you know that it was written with the intent that it be memorized?

1 אֲשֶׁר־י תְּמִימֵי־דֶרֶךְ הַהֲלָלִים בְּתוֹרַת יְהוָה:
2 אֲשֶׁר־י נֶצְרִי יַעֲדֹתָיו בְּכָל־לֵב יְדַרְשׁוּהוּ:
3 אֲפֹף לֹא־פָעַלְו עוֹלָה בְּדַרְכָּיו הַלְכוּ:
4 אֲתָה צִוִּיתָה פִקְדוֹתֶיךָ לְשֹׁמֵר מִאֵד:
5 אֲחֲלִי יִכְנוּ דַרְכֵי לְשֹׁמֵר חֻקֶיךָ:
6 אֲזַל לֹא־אֲבוֹשׁ בְּהִבִּטִּי אֶל־כָּל־מִצְוֹתֶיךָ:
7 אֲוֹדָךְ בִּישׁוֹר לִבִּי בְּלִמְדֵי מִשְׁפָּטֶי צְדָקָה:
8 אֲת־חֻקֶיךָ אֲשֶׁמֶר אֶל־תַּעֲזָבֵנִי עַד־מָאֵד:
9 בְּמָה יִזְכֶּה־נַּעַר אֶת־אֲרֻחוֹ לְשֹׁמֵר כְּדַבְּרֶךָ:
10 בְּכָל־לִבִּי דִרְשָׁתֶיךָ אֶל־תִּשְׁגֵּנִי מִמִּצְוֹתֶיךָ:
11 בְּלִבִּי צִפְנֹתַי אִמְרֹתֶיךָ לְמַעַן לֹא אֶחְטֵא־לָךְ

Turn to psalm 119 in your Bible. What do you see above verse one? You should see the word ALEPH. That is the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet. Aleph is equivalent to our English letter "A" and the letter Alpha in Greek. In Psalm 119, all eight of the first verses each begin with Aleph. Then when you move to verse nine is begins with the second letter in the Hebrew alphabet, Beth (pronounced as 'Bet'). The Hebrew alphabet has 22 letters so the entire psalm is divided up into 22 sections with eight verses in each section. Do you see, the entire Psalm was

written with the specific intent that it be put to memory.

This is known as an acrostic, which is a memory device, and there are several more like this one. Acrostics occur in Psalms 111 and 112, where each letter begins a line; in Psalms 25, 34, and 145, where each letter begins a half-verse; in Psalm 37 and Proverbs 31:10-31 where each letter begins a whole verse. All of these were written in such a way as to facilitate committing them to memory. Therefore, if God wrote his Word with the intent of memorizing it, shouldn't we be making a little effort to do so?

2. The Bible tells us to memorize it.

OK, who can read verse 11 on the screen? I had a year of Hebrew in seminary but I can't do it either. In the ESV it reads, *I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.* This is understood to mean that we are to memorize the Scripture. Colossians 3:16 tells us to "let the word of Christ dwell in us richly." Deuteronomy 6:6-9 instructs us this way. *And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

While none of these verses specifically command us to memorize Scripture it is most certainly implied. can you really store up the word of God in your heart if you don't also have it in your head? Can the word of Christ dwell in you richly if you are not able to pull some of it from memory and turn it over and over in your heart and mind?

Dallas Willard was a strong proponent of Scripture memory, "Bible memorization is absolutely fundamental to spiritual formation. If I had to choose between all the disciplines of the spiritual life, I would choose Bible memorization, because it is a fundamental way of filling our minds

with what it needs. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth. That's where you need it! How does it get in your mouth? Memorization."²

3. Memorization is the best way to mediate.

What we are talking about here is what the Bible calls meditation. Psalm 119:15 says, *I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways*. The word 'meditate' occurs 22 times in the Old testament. Nineteen of those 22 occurrences are in the book of Psalms and 10 of those 19 are in Psalm 119.

Please don't be afraid of the word mediate. I know that other false religions also use the habit of meditation, but that doesn't make it wrong. Meditation is simply dwelling on a small passage of Scripture. You think about it. You study it. You pray through it. You turn it over and over in your mind and heart until it begins to make more sense, until it comes alive and the end result is that you are changed by it. This is the value of meditation and it occurs best through memorization.

Now if your only goal is memorizing Scripture is to memorize Scripture, then it may not be of much value to you.

Martin Luther was converted primarily through the book of Romans but he was actively engaged in the habits of meditation and memorization. It is amazing that he was practicing these disciplines before he was converted. You would have to say that they were instrumental in his conversion.



At last, by the mercy of God, **meditating** day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, “In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, ‘He who through faith is righteous shall live.’” There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, “He who through faith is righteous shall live.” Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. There a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me. Thereupon I ran through the Scriptures from **memory**...³

Luther meditated deeply upon Scripture and once the truth was revealed to him, his mind "ran through the Scriptures from memory" in order to confirm what he was learning. Remember, he was still an unbeliever at this point.

Along the way I want to offer several resources to help you in your Scripture memory challenge. many people are auditory learners. In fact, even before Ethan could read very well, he memorized his first verses simply by hearing Ryan and Kellyn recite their Bible quiz material

out loud. He wasn't even trying to memorize but he learned them so well that he joined Kellyn's team at the last quiz of that year.

Technology is such that nowadays we have all of these great resources at our fingertips. The absolute best audio Bible resource that I know of is Faith Comes by Hearing. Not only can you listen to their Bibles online, but you can actually download any of their more than [20 audio Bible--for FREE!](#) Once you choose which section of Scripture you plan to memorize, you may benefit form also listening to it. Not to mention the fact that you can pop in the CD or play your mp3 any time you want, as you drive to work or whatever you are doing. They also have [Bible apps for your apple or android](#) device where you can read and listen to any version you want.

4. Some Scripture memory is necessary for evangelism.

1 Peter 3.15-16 says that we are to be *always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.* can you share the gospel with someone if you do not have key verses memorized? I guess you can if you always have gospel tracts with you, but how many of us always have those on hand?

Ray Comfort offered \$1000 to anyone if they ever found him and he did not have gospel tracts with him.⁴ One day he was swimming laps in a pool when a man stopped and asked for his \$1000 reward. Ray pulled out a Ziploc bad from his swim trunks with several tracts in them. Since I doubt you are that prepared at all times, how much better to have some verses memorized and ready to go.

Psalm 119 also has something to say about being prepared.

42- *then shall I have an answer for him who taunts me, for I trust in your word.*

46- *I will also speak of your testimonies before kings and shall not be put to shame*

My first attempt at witnessing came when I was a young believer working at TJ Maxx. There was a fellow employee who had a definite interest in spiritual things. I had just recently heard Josh McDowell speak at Akron University at a campus Crusade event. He had told everyone to say to read through the third chapter of John 3 times. That's all I knew about how to witness so I told this girl the same thing. Go home and read the third chapter of John three times. About a week later she came to me and said, "OK, i did what you said and nothing happened. Now what?" I didn't have an answer for her. I was not prepared in any sense of the word.

Are you? Could you share the bad news of sin and the good news of salvation with someone if you didn't have a Bible on hand? Could you show them the Roman Road from memory? Some Scripture memory is absolutely necessary for evangelism.

5. It will help you to fight sin.

Again, Psalm 119:11 is dead on. *I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.* So is verse nine. *How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.* How did Jesus defeat Satan in the desert? He used the word of God and I am sure he wasn't carrying any scrolls with him at the time. In Ephesians six Paul told us that the Bible is the sword of the Spirit. Do you know how to wield your sword? You see, this is

about more than just Scripture memory. A great many of you don't even have a habit of Bible reading, do you? So why not start two good habits this summer?

Here are some more resources for you from Desiring God ministry.

[Fighter Verses app](#)

[Fighter Verses songs on CD](#)

[Fighter Verses songs on Youtube](#)

ex. beloved...

6. It will be an ever present source of comfort and blessing.

Psalm 119:50- *This is my comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives me life.*

Psalm 119:61- *Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me, I do not forget your law.*

Chuck Swindoll wrote, "I know of no other single practice in the Christian life more rewarding, practically speaking, than memorizing Scripture. . . . No other single exercise pays greater spiritual dividends! Your prayer life will be strengthened. Your witnessing will be sharper and much more effective. Your attitudes and outlook will begin to change. Your mind will become alert and observant. Your confidence and assurance will be enhanced. Your faith will be solidified."⁵

7. Memorization will help you to Know God's character.

68- *You are good and do good; teach me your statutes.*

75- *I know, O LORD, that your rules are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me.*

172- *My tongue will sing of your word, for all your commandments are right.*

Of course this is true with all Bible reading and Bible study but the memorization and meditation factor increases this greatly. For another resource I point you to the [verse card maker](#). You can type in as many verses you want into this verse card maker and it will print a 2 sided paper-or I would suggest card stock--for you. It only does the ESV version so if you want another version, I you are on your own. I make about 10,000 verse cards for all of our quizzers each year so I probably won't have enough time to make yours. Years ago I used those spiral bound note card packet and would hand write an entire epistle on one small notebook. I would carry this with me when I ran and could easily flip the pages. I memorized most of my Scripture while running. Maybe you want to start a third good habit and combine Scripture memory with an new exercise plan!

8. We need memorized Scriptures for when we suffer.

83- *For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke, yet I have not forgotten your statutes.*

There are countless passages that would come to mind that you could bring to mind while you are going through a trial. Romans 8 has some of the best words of comfort anywhere in the Bible. Perhaps some of you will want to memorize Romans 8.

Also, think about all of the combined years that Brother Yun spent in four different prisons. He was able to bring to mind thousand of verses because he had committed them to memory.

9. For when we need wisdom and direction.

105- *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*

150- *The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.*

Do you need wisdom and direction? James tells us to pray for wisdom but we also need to be immersed in the every present form of wisdom contained in the word of God.

10. Because there are NO EXCUSES for not starting this wonderful habit.

There aren't any *good* excuses, but I will try to debunk just a few of the bad ones.

- **I am too old--my memory is shot.**

Here's how John Piper answers this excuse.

Don't say you can't memorize because you have a bad memory. That's why you need to memorize. I have a bad memory too. I think it's worse than average — seriously. I forget names of people I know and see regularly! I have to force my faulty, inefficient brain to drive things that matter most into my long-term memory. This only happens by the process of repeating (memorizing) every day over a period of time. You'd be surprised what you can commit to memory if you have a simple system and put forth some effort. I've memorized five New Testament books and am working on my sixth. And that's because I have a bad memory.⁶

- **I am too young.**

If you are old enough to have this thought then you are most certainly not too young. Parents, you can help your kids memorize using cards, computers, phones and music.

- **The Pharisees memorized tons of Scripture and look what happened to them!**

This is actually very true. Scripture memory, like any spiritual discipline, does not make you holy all by itself. In fact, it can make you even more prideful than you already are. But then that's not the fault of Scripture memory, is it? That's a heart matter. If you set out in a prayerful way to memorize God's word so that it will transform you, and not merely inform you, then you should not have to worry about turning into a Pharisee.

- **I don't have time.**

Please. You always make time for what you value and the problem is that you currently do not value Scripture memory. But that can change. I hope that I have been able to pry you loose to consider this summer challenge. I trust that you will be willing to pray about developing a good habit of Scripture memory.

All of us naturally follow the economic principle called the Law of Incentive. Let's say that you had to walk 1/4 mile to get your mail and when you did, there was always a ten dollar bill in there. When you drove your car to get the mail, no money. But every time you walked, there was ten bucks. What are you going to do each day? You are going to walk the short distance and pick up your easy money. Ten bucks isn't much money but if you can pick up an extra ten dollars every day, you'd gladly walk the 1/2 mile distance. You now have a built in incentive to walk that distance every day. You probably would drive your car if it were not for the incentive.

This is the Law of Incentive and it is a powerful economic principle. It is also a powerful behavioral principle (since economics and behavior are essentially inseparable). We all need an incentive to take up this Scripture memory challenge. If you have never done much Scripture

memory, you don't know what the incentive is, exactly. I have give you 9-10 incentives but until you begin to experience the, I am asking you to trust me. You will be blessed. You will be glad you did this. If your attitude is mostly right, it will bear fruit in your life.

Listen, don't concern yourself with making a commitment to memorize Scripture for the rest of your life. Just make a commitment to do some Scripture memory for the next 90 days. I'd like us to report back often to one another--in personal conversations and in sharing time on Sunday morning about how it is going. Consider getting an accountability partner if you think that would help. As always, this message will be on our website and I will include the links to all of the resources I mentioned. Can we do this together as a church body? I think we will be blessed beyond our imagination.

Rich Maurer
June 1, 2014

¹ Heavenly Man, brother Yun and Paul Hattaway, Piquant Editions, UK, © 2003, p. 33.

² ("Spiritual Formation in Christ for the Whole Life and Whole Person" in *Vocatio*, Vol. 12, no. 2, Spring, 2001, p. 7.

³ Luther's preface to the complete edition of his Latin writings, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 34 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), pp. 336-37.

⁴ <http://ministrytodaymag.com/index.php/ministry-outreach/evangelism/10347-afflicting-the-comfortable>

⁵ *Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994], p. 61.

⁶ <http://www.desiringgod.org/blog/posts/ten-reasons-to-memorize-big-chunks-of-the-bible>