

Hiding God's Word in My Heart - 2012

As we begin 2012, I want to challenge each member of the First Baptist Church family to join me in a scheduled plan of Scripture memorization. The plan calls for two verses each month. This package provides verse cards for four commonly used translations: New American Standard (NASU), New International Version (NIV), New King James (NKJV) and the King James Version (KJV). If you use another translation, then write out the verse on the back of one of the verse cards in the translation you use.

The founder of the non-denominational Christian organization, The Navigators, Dawson Trotman, once said that the two disciplines that made the greatest impact in his personal spiritual development were: a personal devotional time and the memorization of Scripture.

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"*

Why should you consider participating in this plan? I'll give you six reasons:

1. Conformity to Christ - Paul wrote that *"we all, . . . beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another"* (2 Corinthians 3:18)) If we would be changed into Christ likeness we must steadily see him. This happens in the word. *"The Lord revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the Lord"* (1 Samuel 3:21). Bible memorization has the effect of making our gaze on Jesus steadier and clearer.
2. Daily Triumph over Sin - *"How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. . . . I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you"* (Psalm 119:9, 11). Paul said that we must *"by the Spirit . . . put to death the [sinful] deeds of the body"* (Romans 8:13). The one piece of armor used to kill is the *"sword of the Spirit"* which is the word of God (Ephesians 6:17). As sin lures the body into sinful action, we call to mind a Christ-revealing word of Scripture and slay the temptation with the superior worth and beauty of Christ over what sin offers.
3. Daily Triumph over Satan - When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness he recited Scripture from memory and put Satan to flight (Matthew 4:1-11).
4. Comfort and Counsel for People You Love - The times when people need you to give them comfort and counsel do not always coincide with the times you have your Bible handy. Not only that, the very word of God spoken spontaneously from your heart has unusual power. Proverbs 25:11 says, *"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver."* That is a beautiful way of saying, *"When the heart full of God's love can draw on the mind full of God's word, timely blessings flow from the mouth."*
5. Communicating the Gospel to Unbelievers - Opportunities to share the gospel come when we do not have the Bible in hand. Actual verses of the Bible have their own penetrating power. And when they come from our heart, as well as from the Book, the witness is given that they are precious enough to learn. We should all be able to sum up the gospel under four main headings (1) God's holiness/law/glory; 2) man's sin, rebellion, disobedience; 3) Christ's death for sinners; 4) the free gift of life by faith. Learn a verse or two relating to each of these, and be ready in season and out of season to share them.
6. Communion with God in the Enjoyment of His Person and Ways - The way we commune with (that is, fellowship with) God is by meditating on his attributes and expressing to him our thanks and admiration and love, and seeking his help to live a life that reflects the value of these attributes. Therefore, storing texts in our minds about God helps us relate to him as he really is.

How To Memorize

Many of you are convinced that you can't memorize Bible verses. Yet we memorize telephone numbers, addresses, web site addresses, and words to our favorite music. The real issue is not ability, but technique. Below I've outlined a technique that I am convinced will make it possible for anyone to memorize Scripture.

Memorize the Topic. You will find each verse has a topic printed in BOLD letters at the top of the verse card. This will help you "file" the verse in your memory. Trying to memorize a verse without any reference to what it is saying makes the process much more difficult.

Memorize the Reference. Knowing the reference for each verse makes it possible to find the verse in the Bible immediately when you need it for personal use or helping others. As you begin to memorize the verse, always begin with each topic, then the reference ... quote the verse then repeat the reference.

Memorize Small Portions at a Time. Begin with topic and reference, then add the first few words of the verse, repeating until you can say it without looking. Then add the next few words or phrase. Continue to repeat and add small portions until you can repeat it all without looking. Then as noted below, review it each day for the first two weeks.

Learn the Verse Word-Perfect. The reason for this may not seem immediately obvious. Knowing a verse word-perfectly gives you much greater confidence when using the verse. Also, it avoids misunderstanding the verse or leading others astray with erroneous ideas about the verse. It also makes it easier to review them later.

Review. Here is a good technique for reviewing your verses:

1. Daily for the first two weeks, 2. Weekly for the next four weeks, 3. Monthly from then on out

Accountability. One of the best ways to stay diligent about this effort is to find a partner who will hold you accountable and who will challenge you to get it word perfect. Establish a scheduled time to have your accountability partner check you off ... and give them permission to challenge you throughout the week. This positive peer pressure will help you stay committed. As Eccl 4:9 reminds us, "*Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor.*" (NASU)

Translations. Memorize verses in the translation you use most often. I recommend using a "translation" (New American Standard, King James, New International Version, English Standard Version, etc.) instead of a "paraphrase" such as the *Living Bible* or *The Message* as a paraphrase is not taken from the original languages and is much more susceptible to error. Once you choose a translation, it is best to learn all your verses in that translation rather than mixing in others.

Our Plan. The cards included in this package provide two verses for each month of 2012. Cut out the one you are memorizing and keep it in your pocket or wallet and refer to it often. Begin memorizing your first verse during the **first week of the month** and your second verse during the **third week of the month**. Continue this pattern each month. During our weekly prayer meetings we will have an opportunity to dig into these verses in greater detail. I am looking forward to hearing some of your personal testimonies throughout this coming year.

At the end of the year you will be equipped with 24 powerful verses that you will find valuable throughout your life. If you want to go beyond this series, come see me! May you experience the power and peace that comes from hiding God's Word in your heart!

Together in Him,