

# "Introduction to scripture memorization"

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**Bible Text:** Psalm 1:1-6  
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Tonight, I'm going to encourage you to open your Bible to the book of Psalm 1. Now if you're a regular on Sunday evening you may discover this is kind of a divergent path here. Rightfully so. We have been very slowly and strategically over time walking through what we know as the gospel of Matthew. However, we're entering that season, at least that calendar season in the life of our church, where because of special events and outreach opportunities and what we know as Christmas, more often than not, our Sunday evenings get a little more sporadic as far as regular Bible teaching. And you may or may not know this, but the gospel of Matthew has a very natural division at the end of chapter 8, which is what we finished. So we'll pick up chapter 9 here in a little bit. But this evening, as well as next Sunday night, I wanted to address a topic of concern that should not only be a part of your regular daily life, but we're going to see in the days ahead, it's going to be very critical to the life of our church. I want to talk about the importance of scripture memorization. Now, I know this is something that we hear about on a regular basis, we hear preached, we hear taught, and I know deep down in within us, if someone were to ask us, is this an important reality or an important discipline of our lives, we obviously would say yes. However, I would also say that's maybe possibly the most neglected of what we typically call spiritual and disciplines.

Before we go to the text tonight, you're going to see somewhat of a logo up there that has the numbers 1,189. When you see that, you may be thinking to yourself, what does that mean? What's so important about that? Let me share with you about that number, what that number means, and what that number is going to mean to you and I in the days ahead. 1,189 is the number of chapters in the Bible. Okay? Now, granted Psalm 119 has 22 chapters within it, okay, but technically speaking there are 1,189 chapters in your Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and what I'm about to share with you we as a team as a staff have been talking about for about 18 months now, our deacon body has been a part of it for almost a year and our Sunday school teachers, at least our adult Sunday school teachers as well as age grade, were introduced to it last week. I'm going to ask a very rhetorical question because you realize a rhetorical question has an obvious answer, right? What would it look like if we as a church, if we as a body of believers, what would it look like if we actually memorized the whole Bible? Now think about that. As an individual, it's impossible. Now, there are people that have pulled it off, okay? But generally speaking, would we all agree that as an individual goal, that's beyond reach? How about your family? Think about it. I'm not just talking about your kids. I'm talking

about, you know, son-in-law's and daughter-in-law's grandkids. What if you collected what you know is a family reunion and you pulled all those people together, how about that? It'd be even beyond difficult, would it not? Even with that great number of people. But God has blessed us here. In fact, we're going to talk about that here from Psalm 1. We are a blessed people. We are a blessed body. We are a blessed family of faith. We're just a blessed church. You realize that on any given Sunday, we have three times that many people on this campus and that doesn't include all the folks that are watching and are part of our online ministry. And so what would it look like if we collectively, as a group, as a body, what if we strategically memorized the whole Bible? Now, I don't want you to panic. This is actually what you're going to start hearing about in the days and weeks ahead for the entire year of 2024. And here's what I'm going to go ahead and put the cart before the horse. I'm going to go ahead and allow you to panic mode and pass out. You ready? Is we're going to challenge each and every one of us to memorize one chapter. You've got one year, one chapter. Now I know what you're thinking, I've never done that before. It's okay. The average chapter in the Bible has 26 verses but if you want to be a star student, you need to pick Psalm 117. It's got two verses, that's it.

That being said, I realize there are those that this discipline comes easier than others. There are many of you who've said, I've never even really truly embraced this endeavor. But it's beyond feasible together as a body. And I want to leave you with a thought before we go to the text. You know, I love going on mission trips, but one of the things about mission trips is that when you're there, oftentimes the conditions are not, shall we say, not as conducive as they are back home. One of the things I love to say about being on a mission trip is when everybody stinks, nobody stinks. In other words, when you're in a like condition as everybody else, that condition doesn't stand out like it normally would. Scripture memorization, we're going to talk about this tonight, is difficult. It is hard. It is a task that at times can seem unmanageable but when everybody's doing it, it becomes easier. And so I'm just here to share with you that in the next calendar year, 2024, as a body of believers, we're going to seek out the ambition of memorizing the whole Bible from beginning to end and with the number of people that we have as a part of our family, we could go two and three deep on every single chapter.

But tonight rather than talking about that whole strategy, I want to talk about the importance of scripture memorization irrespectively as a body of Christ, just you as an individual, the importance, the necessity of doing so. In Psalm 1 it says,

1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Of the 150 Psalms that we have in scripture. I mean this is the rightful beginning here. It basically says there are two paths, there are two ways that you can live your life. You can either live a life that's blessed or a life that's cursed. What's interesting is that everything hinges on verse 2. It says, "But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." And basically what the Lord is communicating to you and I as individuals collectively as a body of Christ, it is an understanding, it is a heartfelt grasp of scripture that truly makes the difference which direction we walk on the decisions of life that involve us. And so tonight, I just want to walk through some basic concepts regarding what we know as scripture memorization.

I want to begin with this: the power of scripture memorization. Now remember here in Psalm 1 it says really it's the difference between blessing and curse. Speaking of that, if you're able I want you to turn to Genesis 2. Let's go back to the original blessing and curse and the original call to memorize scripture. You may or may not realize this. I'm sure you do, you just haven't thought about it. You do know that when Adam and Eve stepped in the Garden of Eden, God did not give them a paper, book, and/or list and say, "Here you go." What did he do? He spoke to them. He communicated information to them that they were not only to take to heart, but I would say in light of Psalm 1, to meditate day and night. Genesis 2:16, it says, "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Now I want you to think about this from a very practical memorization perspective. It speaks about every tree and then this one tree. So we can conjecture that there's a host of trees in the garden.

Now again, I'm just somewhat reading into the text and forgive me for doing so. I promise I'm not reading beyond the text. Can you imagine Adam and Eve waking up one morning and getting out there and going, "All right, now which one are we supposed to or not? I just can't get this straight." You do realize that what God spoke to them was the difference between blessing and cursing. This isn't about a preference. This isn't about my personal choice. When they ate, either life would continue or death would ensue, and everything was based on internalizing, memorizing, and living out the words that God gave them. And so you can kind of picture a daily experience in the garden because what you get the ideas is that this tree of knowledge of good and evil, it wasn't somewhere tucked in the back corner. It was something that was visible. It would have been something that would have been an irregular visibility. And each and every day, and by the way, nobody knows exactly how many days they experienced a blessing before the cursing, they would have to remind themselves of what God said.

Here's the struggle, here's the issue. Turn over one page to chapter 3. I want you to hear the tactic of the enemy. Chapter 3, verse 1, "Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman," listen to this, "Yea, hath God said?" You realize that is the root of every struggle and every temptation known to man, that all the enemy has to do is get us to doubt the veracity of

the word of God. All he's got to do is put that seed in our heart, seed in our mind that God really didn't mean what he said and he didn't really say what he meant.

Now notice what the serpent does. "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Now if you begin to dissect what the serpent said, you know what you'll discover? Is not only did he leave a very important word out, the word was freely, is he twisted the words of God. And we discover from the very beginning of humanity's story that when God's word is hidden in our heart, just like Psalm 119:11 says, we do not fall into sin. When we do not place God's word in our heart, we have a propensity to do exactly what happened in chapter 3. You say, "Well what happened?" They began to rationalize, they began to justify, they began to conjure up all these ways how some way it would actually be beneficial for them to eat of this tree even though God said not to do so. Again, it goes back to the power of scripture memorization. When we have God's word hidden in our heart, it gives us clarity, it gives us direction, it gives us, according to Psalm 1, the path of blessing and not the path of cursing.

Why is scripture memorization so necessary? In the Garden of Eden, they didn't have a paper copy of what we know as the Bible. You do realize their scriptures would have been very short back then, would have been two verses. That's all it was. But as you walk through the scriptures, you know what you discover? That chronologically and historically speaking, this is not just a Bible times analogy, this is an all time analogy. Historically, chronologically speaking, humanity has spent more days without the written word of God than with the written word of God, and what I mean by that is there were thousands of years between Adam and Eve and when God gave Moses the first five books of the Bible. So what did humanity do? God spoke, we internalized, we reiterated, and we lived it out. If we did what God said, we received blessing. If not, cursing.

I think one of the most fascinating scriptures in all the Bible is found in 1 Samuel 3. 1 Samuel 3, remember the famous story of Samuel the one who Hannah brought to the priest and Eli, you remember that night when the Lord spoke to Samuel and Samuel didn't know who it was? He had never heard the voice of God. He never heard the words of God and God spoke to him and he got up in the night and he ran to Eli and he said, "What's going on?" He said, "Oh, don't worry about it. Go back to bed." He goes back several times. Do you remember at the end of the story, Eli, this wise man, supposedly, says, "You know what, son? Next time you hear the voice, simply say, 'Lord, I'm here.' God is speaking." You know, that story seems a little bit confounding to us. How is it that a man who'd been a priest for all these decades, a man in charge of the things of God, how could he not recognize the word of God? If you go back to verse 1 of that same chapter, you know what it says? The word of God was precious in those days. I don't know if you realize this, but you and I today, I'm just going to call us what we are, we're spoiled. The average American home has at least three Bibles in it. That's on average. We live in a world today where in over 50 countries, formally and officially, the word of God is illegal to possess but you do know there is no law on the books that can keep you from hiding it in your heart. And what we discover throughout the Old Testament, throughout the New Testament, and throughout history, that collectively the body of Christ, the believers in Jesus Christ, whether they had a copy of God's word or not, they memorized

it. They put it, they internalized it for their own personal edification as well as those around them.

So what is the benefit? I mean, let's just be honest with ourselves everybody here is going to say, "Oh, I know that should be a part of my life." But let's be practical. What is the actual benefit of memorizing scripture? It says here in verse 3 of Psalm 1, "And you shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water." Now, I realize that I grew up in an area of the world where a tree is a mesquite bush, okay, I'm just going to call it out for what it is. I joke about where I grew up, everything is hot, flat, and brown. I know I'm at the half century mark, but every time a storm comes up, I go outside and I watch it. It's not because I'm scared. I'm amazed. I get to see something that most of you have grown up with your whole life. These winds start whipping and these trees start swaying and I don't know how they don't fall over. I mean I know technically how they don't fall over. I get that. But I'm watching them because here's what I think. I keep watching them sway in the wind and I keep thinking to myself, "Surely, surely it's going to fall." But it doesn't. And you know and I know why, it's because deep down under the ground there are roots that are stabilizing it and securing it and keeping it from snapping, keeping it from breaking. What does it say? It says that when we meditate on the law of God both day and night, we're compared to a tree. Trees have a root system that allow them to weather the storms.

Now before I share this analogy, allow me to also communicate that you and I, we're not just spoiled because we have multiple copies of the word of God in our lives and in our homes, you and I specifically, and I know there's people watching online, in what I call the upper corner of Lower Alabama, here we are in Opelika, Alabama, I don't think you realize how blessed we are as a church family. We are experiencing growth. We are experiencing people getting saved, lives being transformed. We're experiencing baptisms and mission trips. We are a blessed, blessed people. But did you know that today, right now, on this side of what we know as the pandemic, the average church in America has 25 to 30% less people than they did before and we're experiencing the opposite problem. You know where you live? Goshen. You remember Goshen? Goshen in the Old Testament, in the midst of Egypt where everything was just sideways, Goshen was that one area that disease didn't hit. Goshen was that one area where when it was dark outside it was light. inside. Goshen was the place where God, you may not realize this, you know it wasn't just Jewish people in Goshen, the Egyptians went to. You know the Egyptians weren't near as dumb as we give them credit for. Some of them said, "Hey, dark out here, light in there," and they went to Goshen because Goshen was the place of protection. And I'm going to state this very clearly, you and I right now, whether you realize it or not, you live in a modern day Goshen. Now, will God's provision allow that to continue? It's not up to me. It's up to him.

But let me talk greater than Goshen. Let's talk about our culture. Let's talk about our society as a whole. Some years ago, there was a man by the name of Dickerson who wrote a book that is one of those every now and then you read a book that just changes you, transforms you, it really just rattles you for the good. And in this book, his title was "The Coming Great Evangelical Recession," and basically what he equated to is what you

and I saw economically in 2007 and 2008 is coming to the evangelical church. Here's basically what he paralleled or what he stated. If you were to go back, and by the way, I've done this exercise several times, if you know somebody who's in the finance world, you know somebody that's in the banking world, you know somebody who's in that genre of shall we say occupation, and you ask them, "If you could go back to 2007 what would you change?" You know what the answer I get from most of them? Everything. You know why? Because we as a culture did not realize how unstable the foundations were. We didn't realize how unstable the system was and when pressure was exerted, it fell to pieces. It was a mess. And I'm not here tonight to talk about something that happened 15 years ago, but this man wrote this book and he compared it to the American church at large. He said, you know, our stability is not near as what we think it is. And he begins to go through some of the things that we've believed that are not true anymore and the very first thing he deals with is that we're not near as large and impactful as we think we are. If you were to ask people in this community, how many people do you think are faithful church attenders? Well, you and I might use double digits. Some of you might go north of 50%. I don't know. But you know, according to both secular and non-secular research agencies, the number of born-again evangelical Christians in America is now less than 10%. We're not near as large, we're not near as impactful. as we once were.

The second issue he addresses, and I'm not going to belabor this, is we're not near as loved as we used to be. I don't know if you've noticed this, but the love has gone by the wayside. It used to be beneficial when you told somebody you were a believer. It used to be beneficial when you told them that you were faithful and active in your local church. Nowadays, maybe not so much. Do you truly believe that the propagation, the printing, and the accessibility of scripture in days future is going to be more prominent than days past? Come on, people. We live in a culture and we live in a society today that the storms are brewing, the winds are starting to blow, and if you and I, as individuals, and if you and I, as a collective body of believers, if we're going to weather the storm, we better make sure that our roots are deep. We better make sure that we don't fall into the first Samuel 3 trap of the words of the Lord were precious in those days.

The second thing it says here in verse 3 is it will bring forth fruit in its season. Now when you talk about fruit from a spiritual perspective, you can categorize that as people becoming believers, believers getting more sincere and serious about their faith. There's a host of things there. But if you go back to the parable of the sower in Mark 4, Jesus said that when it lands on good ground, the word of God, it produces some 30, some 60, some 100 fold. I talked about earlier that we're in the "land of Goshen." We are blessed people. But I'm going to call the proverbial spade a spade. Why do we see so many lives changed as a part of the ministries of this church? Why do we see so many baptisms? I'm going to tell you why. Because as of this moment, and God help us if it ever changes, as of this moment, you and I as individuals and you and I as a church, we are faithful to the veracity and the truth of God's word and we do not budge regarding it. When you stand faithful to the word of God, fruit is produced. When you begin to compromise, when you begin to say, "Well, let's rationalize and justify," what happened with Adam and Eve? The curse took over rather than the blessing.

It says it will be a fruitful life. It says in verse 3, it will not wither away. You know, it's interesting in Matthew 4, Jesus is tempted of the devil. Now I realize there's so much more there than just you and I walking through a struggle. We're talking about God in flesh and we're talking about the fallen cherubim here. I mean, this is a pretty significant struggle that's happening. And I know you're aware of this, but three very specific times the devil comes to Jesus and he tempts him. You do remember how Jesus responded every time, right? "It is written." And by the way, I know he's God in flesh, but he didn't say, "Oh, hold on, let me turn to page 15." How did he know it was written? Not only did he author scripture, but he had it memorized, correct? He quoted from the word of God three times to refute, to rebut, and to come contrary to the enemy.

But one of the things that Jesus said in Matthew 4 is he said that the word of God would last forever. It would never fade away. It would never go away. In fact, later in Matthew 5 in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus makes this statement. He says, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the word of God shall never pass away." We live in a world today of trends. In fact, what amazes me is that something that is well received today is out of date in about three days. Thanks to technology, things come and go so quickly, but the word of God never fades away.

And finally in verse 3, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. Now push pause. Don't think prosperity gospel. Don't think this twisting of the word of God that we've got today that means that somehow, somehow, if I'm doing things God's way, he's going to give me a new car, a big house, and a whole bunch of money. That's not what it's saying. In fact, you find me in scripture where that's the actual telltale evidence of walking in intimacy with the Lord Jesus Christ. You don't find it. The Apostle Paul was stoned five times. Is that the prosperity gospel? He was left for dead three times.

Now push pause because it's kind of serious. Can I get a little bit non-serious for a moment? The Bible says in 2 Corinthians that Paul was stoned so bad three times he was left for dead. Now, just imagine the scene. It was Barnabas and John Mark and others that had to clean all that up. Can you imagine the third time that Paul had been stoned and he wasn't really dead and they're trying to bury him and he wakes up and he's like, "Seriously, guys, when are you going to learn your lesson? I mean, come on!" Three times they're making burial arrangements when he's been hit by the rocks that have been thrown.

According to the book of 3 John, verse 2, it says the Lord desires for you to prosper but not more than your soul. What does that mean? It simply means what 1 Peter talks about in chapters 2 and 3 when it talks about the adornment of the outside versus the inside; basically our opulent world, our ability to acquire substance should not exceed our spiritual acquisition of substance. In other words, our fervor for the things of this world should never exceed our fervor for the things of God.

And in Joshua 1, the Israelites had been in the wilderness for 40 years. You remember the scene? All those that doubted, questioned, had died out. They're about to go over the Jordan River, go into what we know as the Promised Land. The priests had the ark of

God. They walked before Joshua. Remember what God said? It said that, "You will have success everywhere you go if you do not stray from these words. Go and do exactly as I've said go and do." Now remember, it wasn't in a book. These are the words of God that's just communicated to the people of God. Now remember that first big battle, Jericho. Now I tease about this all the time, but I'm being serious. You talk about a battle strategy. Can you imagine right now, I'm going to make it real time. There's a battle going on in Israel right now and it's real. That's not generated. That is real life battle happening, okay? Can you imagine there's all kinds of technology, there's all kinds of military, can you imagine right now just for the sake of conversation, can you imagine if if Netanyahu, the man who basically is running the show, can you imagine if he came and said, "Okay, I've instructed the IDF," that's the Israeli Defense Forces, "I've instructed them to go down to Gaza, and for six days, they're just going to walk the perimeter. Oh don't worry, they're not going to have guns, rockets, missiles, they're going to have pots and pans. And on the seventh day, they're going to do it seven times. And when they blow the horn, it's over." What do you think would happen? He would be voted out of office in about 3.2 seconds. Correct? But what did God tell them to do? Those were the instructions. "Go and walk." In other words, what we discover here is our prosperity does not come from us coming up with a creative idea, it comes from us doing it simply as God told us to do.

So, here's an important question: what happens if we don't memorize scripture? Well, according to this passage, we become like the ungodly in verse 4 and we blow away with the chaff. Is that not a picture of "Christian culture" today? We're blowing this way, we're blowing that way. With every concept that comes up, we tend to be like the chaff, we just blow away in the wind. Why? Because just like Adam and Eve and just like Eli in 1 Samuel, we are susceptible to any and every idea that sounds pleasing to the ear. Let me remind you, 2 Timothy 4, Paul warned us in the last days they're going to seek out teachers who itch their ears, not not telling them what they need to hear but telling them what they want to hear. And the last time I checked, when the chaff blows it is of no use, it simply goes into the fire.

In 1 Corinthians 10:13, it says there is no temptation known to man that the Lord is not aware of, prepared us and given us a way out. In other words, there's not a struggle, there's not an issue, there's not a problem that you and I as individuals or collectively, corporately, could ever face that the word of God does not contain.

Secondly, if we don't memorize scripture, we're not able to stand very firm, are we? Ephesians 6, it says, we don't fight against flesh and blood. We fight against principalities and powers and rulers of darkness. It says that we wrestle with the devil. And one of the things it says in that passage is that do all that you can do, but make sure that you stand. You stand your ground. You don't retreat. You don't go by the wayside. You stand firm. If you don't have the solid roots, if you don't have the firm foundation, you can't stand, and one of the things that a lack of scripture memorization does is it makes us susceptible to any and all ideas that come our way that are contrary to scripture because we don't know what the scripture says and our stance is not very strong.



In fact, those of you that know the sports world know that there's a term we use called getting caught on your heels. Basically what that means is you don't have a firm stance. You're not prepared. You're not ready. Now baseball was my sport of choice, okay, and for a lot of different reasons, but I love the game, but one thing that the coach has taught us, each and every pitch whether you're playing the outfield, whether you're playing the infield, doesn't matter what position you're playing, as that pitcher's getting ready to throw the pitch, what you do is you get in position. You stand firm. If you're back on your heels, if you're lollygagging, guess what happens? When that ball comes your way, there's no chance, right? Well, the picture, the imagery is the same here, that we're not able to stand. When all these ideas, when all these concepts that our culture continues to throw at us, that catch us off guard, and if they don't carry us away, they knock us down. I'm not saying that most of us are caught up in everything that they're selling, but we're getting blindsided by it. We're getting caught off guard by it because you and I do not possess, collectively and corporately, this grasp of scripture that we need to have.

Some years ago, and some of you may have heard this story/analogy, I had the privilege of being in what we know as the country of India. And I'm just going to be straight up with you, that's where I learned the phrase, if it's in the Bible, it may not be Baptist. If it's Baptist, it may not be Bible. Because I saw things that aren't very Baptist, but they're Bible. Does that communicate? And as I'm there, there was a pastor, his last name was Kumar. Pastor Kumar had visited the States on numerous occasions and he gave me this analogy. I love this analogy because some of the things that I saw there, I had never seen here. And in light of last Sunday night's message, some of the things that I used to see there, I'm starting to see here. Here's what he said. He said, where the word of God increases, the overt activity of the enemy must decrease because it reveals his plans. It reveals his strategy. But when you take the word of God and you decrease it, then the activity of the enemy increases because he can get away with it. And what do we do? Just like we talked about last night, we see overt demonization of our culture and we claim it's physical. We claim it's emotional. We claim it's this. We claim it's that. The enemy has subverted us because the knowledge of the word of God has diminished and decreased.

I'm going to end with the final question, so why? Why should you and I make scripture memorization a priority for our lives? Why should we make it a priority for our church's life? Two reasons. The first is spiritual, and the second is physical. Let's deal with the spiritual for just a moment. We live in a culture, as I just said, where the word of God and its importance is on the decline. We live in a culture today, a society today, where "Thus saith the Lord" is considered hate speech. Have you considered that? There are pastors in our culture today whose sermons are being investigated as hate speech simply because they quote what the Bible says. You and I are in a spiritual battle and the word of God is at the center of it all, and if the word of God can be removed, if the word of God can be relegated, if the word of God can be diminished, then according to Hebrews 4:12, our sword is weak. You do realize Hebrews 4:12 says the word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword. It did not say a paper Bible is sharper than. By the way, I love my paper Bible. You do realize you can burn every Bible in the world and you have not gotten rid of the word of God. You can get rid of it. And I'll be honest with you, one of

the things that makes me nervous, and I do use it on multiple occasions, what makes me nervous about digital Bibles is all it takes is this flip of the switch and it's gone. You and I live in a culture, in a society today where the recognition of and the reverence of God's word has diminished very, very quickly and I would dare say that we're entering a time, we're entering a day where it's going to become less and less available.

Now I realize it's not scriptural, and please note my humor, it's not even apocryphal, but there was a book written some years ago called "Fahrenheit 451." The author by the name of Ray Bradbury. What was his illustration? That those in power, those in authority, so wanted to subject their subjects that they removed all ability to possess books, reading, knowledge, and information. Those of you who read that book, do you remember what the one item that was guarded with everybody's life? There was one copy of the word of God that was left.

And so today, when we talk about scripture memorization, when we talk about we corporately, us individually, I think you and I, I don't want to use the term, but we're somewhat foolish if we think the word of God is going to become more popular and more readily available in days ahead. So spiritually speaking, there is a battle that is happening. There's a battle that's going to increase. And if we're going to have a sword that is sharper than any other two-edged sword, we don't just need the word of God on our phones, we don't just need the word of God on our shelf, we need the word of God in our hearts.

But then there's the physical one. I will confess to you that of all the spiritual disciplines, you say, "What are spiritual disciplines?" Well, prayer, Bible reading, Fellowship, worship, those are spiritual disciplines, how do you live out your faith. This is the toughest one. It's hard. I mean, I don't know about you, but I don't sing well, but it's easy to sing. You say, "What do you mean it's easy to sing?" I believe in the words of these songs and I like singing with y'all, so I don't have a problem singing. I don't have a problem showing up. I don't have a problem reading. I'll be honest with you, prayer's not the easiest thing, but it's easier than scripture memorization. Scripture memory is not easy and I think I know why, it goes back to the spiritual because that's what the devil tried to talk us out of in the first place. He tried to talk us out of it. He tried to remove it from us. And if you look out throughout time, that has been his goal.

So tonight, not only as an individual, but us as a corporate body, I wanted to introduce from Psalm 1, the importance of scripture memorization, but also want to share with you the potential of next calendar year, we as a body of Christ memorizing the whole Bible. Now I realize it's a daunting task. I realize there are people that say, "I just don't know if I can do it." So tonight, I'm going to draw from a secular example. You remember the late '60s? Some of you say, "Well, I don't remember it, but I've read about it." Okay, that's fine. Late '60s, United States and what we know as the USSR was in the proverbial space race and at Rice University in Houston, Texas, a President by the name of John F. Kennedy made a very famous speech declaring that by the end of the decade, the United States was going to go to the moon. He died in November of '63. So it's early. So in the early part of the decade, he said, this was our goal, this was our ambition, this was our purpose. And there was a line in that speech that I love. Here's what he said, "We do not

do this because it is easy. We do it because it is hard." Can I be transparent with y'all? We as a culture, we've taken the easy road one too many times. We have dumbed down everything in our society and in our culture. We have said that the easiest path must be the propagated path. Ladies and gentlemen, scripture memorization for you as an individual and for us as a church body, we shouldn't do it because it's easy. We should do it because it is hard. And the fact that it is hard, it shows us the importance of doing it.

In conclusion, as a bridge to next Sunday night, Psalm 119:11, it says, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart so that I might not sin against thee." Again, if they flip the switch or they burn all the paper copies, you and I are going to be left with what we already have. Don't you want to make sure that we have all of what God's given us?

Let's pray with their heads bowed and our eyes closed. Tonight as we come to our time of decision, you may be that person tonight that even though we talked about the importance of scripture memorization, God may have gotten a hold of your heart somehow, someway, supernaturally and showed you that you're a sinner who needs to be saved. You need to call on Jesus. If tonight's that decision, we relish it, we cherish it, we celebrate it. Tonight, the Bible says today's the day of salvation. That'd be a great night to do exactly what scripture says, whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. But maybe tonight, you've already taken care of that, that's already a part of your testimony. I'm not here for raising of hands. I'm not here for you to look up and look at me. But I think every single one of us, myself included, would be willing to say that the internalization, the hiding of God's word in our hearts has been a neglected discipline, it's been a practice that's often gone by the wayside because, after all, I have three copies in my house and there's already one on my phone and on my computer. But again, Psalm 119:11 doesn't say have three copies in your house so you don't sin against him. It says hide it in your heart. Tonight may be a night where you need to render a public decision where you step out and step forward or maybe tonight is the night where we look back at Genesis 2 and we look forward all the way through scripture and realize how important it is and how often the enemy has talked us out of it.

*Lord Jesus, as we come to this time of decision, thank you. God, thank you that you have commanded us, you have commissioned us on how to live this life to its fullest. You told the Israelites in Joshua 1 everywhere they stepped would be prosperous because of what you said. You told us in Romans 10 that we don't have to go to hell, we can go to heaven if we would simply do as you said and believe in Jesus Christ. Help us tonight, O God, to believe and to trust that your word says what it means, it means what it says, and it should be hidden within our hearts. Lord, tonight, may you prick our hearts in however and whatever decision you've lead us to. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*