

NOTHING MORE IMPORTANT IN 2021

(Scripture Memory Is the Most Important Thing You and Your Family Can Do in 2021)

Psalm 119: 5-6, 9-19, 47-48, 89-93, 105, Psalm 37: 30-31, and Psalm 40: 8

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If your life depended on knowing the Bible, how long would you last? At the end of World War II, Allied forces were clearing out the remaining Nazi resistance. One unit was assigned a crucial mission in Berlin. Each soldier had to memorize a map detailing all Berlin's important military sites. They had to do it overnight. Each soldier committed the map to memory and the unit successfully discharged their mission. Years later, the Army conducted an experiment to see if the original feat could be duplicated. They offered an Army unit an extra week's furlough—a vacation. The second unit could not memorize a map of Berlin in a week's time. What made the difference? The lives of the men in the second unit, were not at stake. Surviving death in battle was a greater motivation than a week's vacation. The greatest reason all of us sin is our failure to memorize Scripture. We lie to ourselves that God's Word never requires Scripture memory. We say, "I have a poor memory. I never have time. I am too old. I tried before and failed. Why bother; I have a new computer program. I never want to become spiritually proud. Bible verses are for children. It is too much work; to tell you the truth, I am just too lazy. If any of those excuses are your excuses, you are not alone. The real reason we refuse to memorize God's Word is we choose not to obey the calling of God's Word. Our choice not to memorize the Word pays awful wages. "The wages of sin is death," Romans 6: 23. We pay dearly by refusing.

Dr. Howard Hendricks of Dallas Seminary said, "If it were my decision to make, every person graduating from Dallas Theological Seminary would be required to memorize 1,000 verses of Scripture word perfect before they could get their Master of Divinity Degree." Martin Luther, before discovering "the just shall live by faith," in Romans 1: 17, memorized countless verses of Scripture. When the Holy Spirit opened his eyes to the truth of justification by faith, Martin Luther said, "Thereupon I ran through the Scriptures from memory to confirm what I found." William Wilberforce, the British statesman responsible for the abolition of the slave trade in Great Britain, wrote in his diary in 1819, "I walked today from Hyde Park, joyfully repeating the 119th Psalm. God mightily used this man of God who recited all 176 verses by heart. The pioneer missionary David Livingstone won his own Bible at age 9, memorizing, reciting word perfect all 176 verses of Psalm 119.

Dr. Adrian Rogers spoke of scripture memory powerfully. He said, "One of the greatest weapons against pornography is hiding God's Word in your heart. That is, memorization. That is the way to have a pure mind. When you memorize the Word, Scripture is the mind of God. Scripture is the Word of God. When you have Scripture in your heart and mind, you are thinking God's thoughts after Him. Casual reading of the Bible is like a bee flitting over the surface of a flower. Memorization is like the

bee going down into the heart of the flower and gathering nectar. Meditation is like the bee taking the nectar back to the hive and making honey out of it. We need to gather the Word of God so we can meditate on it. God gave us a memory. Scripture memory helps you to remember what you ought to remember and to forget what you ought to forget.” Today, we are going to focus in on Psalm 119: 11. “I have hidden Your Word in my heart/stored up Your Word in my heart, that I might not sin against You.” Why is Scripture memory not only helpful, but indispensable, necessary, and mission-critical to living for Jesus? There are five reasons God has shown me.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY IS GOD’S COMMAND. (I.) Hiding God’s Word in our hearts is essential because God talks in words, He commands us to hide His Word inside our hearts. Psalm 119: 11 was the psalmist’s habit and practice, to obey God’s command to memorize the Word of God. You ask, “Is it God’s command to hide His Word in our hearts?” It is! When we make the discovery God’s people made during the Exodus, it will change our lives. The first time God spoke on Mt. Sinai, the people said, in Deuteronomy 5: 24, “This day, we have heard His voice out of the midst of the fire. This day we have seen God speak with man, and man still live.” Then in Deuteronomy 6: 4-9, in God’s great Shema, this age- old prayer God gave His people, He spoke these words, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. **And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.** You shall teach them diligently to your children, and you 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-up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” Scripture Memory is God’s command to hide, store, and treasure His Word in our hearts. God said in Deuteronomy 11: 18, “You shall therefore lay up these words of Mine in your heart and in your soul.” Secondly,

SCRIPTURE MEMORY IS OUR VERY LIFE. (II.) Hiding God’s Word in our hearts is indispensable. We can exist without God’s Word, but we cannot really live without it. Psalm 119: 11 has the psalmist stating as an accomplished fact, “I have hidden Your Word/I have stored up Your Word in my heart.” It was not only a command obeyed, but it was an accomplished essential of his life. Wednesday Nights, our theme verse is Deuteronomy 8: 3. Listen to it carefully. “And He humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know, that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.” We must memorize the Word of God because these living words from God that we hide in our hearts, and minds, and souls, help us at every turn in life, to know God’s will for our lives. Perhaps you are questioning God’s command to place His Word on your heart. Recognize the source of your questioning. Satan began this questioning in the Garden of Eden, when he said for the first time to Adam and Eve, in Genesis 3: 1, “Did God

actually say, “You shall not eat of any tree in the Garden? Speaking of his Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul said in I Corinthians 2: 13, “And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom, but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.” Moses told God’s people, in Deuteronomy 32: 47, “Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law. For it is no empty word for you, but indeed, it is your very life, and by this Word, you shall live long...” Scripture memory is your very life, and it brings with it, the promise of a long or a full life. In the Ten Commandments, in Exodus 20: 12, God said, “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.” Unless families get back to hiding God’s word methodically in our hearts, our marriages, our families, and our life spans and our nation are in jeopardy.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY IS STORING GOD’S WORD IN OUR HEARTS. (III.)

The Hebrew word for hiding or storing up God’s Word in our hearts is the Hebrew word **tsaphan** means to stash away or treasure up in a secure, covered over secret place which cannot be robbed. Today is the best day in your life to begin the adventure of eating God’s word spiritually through Scripture memory. Jeremiah said, in Jer. 15: 16, “Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your Words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart.” What did Job say in Job 22: 12. Let me read it to you. You will never regret launching out into the great adventure that is ahead for you. The words we memorize become our private library. If you are an investor, I challenge you to invest in a “stock” that has never, and will never decline, and which will pay dividends for eternity. When you memorize the Word of God, it is there for you, when you need it most. Storing away the Word of God is a learnable skill.

You may think you have a bad memory, but you know your phone number. You know dates you need to know. When people say they cannot memorize, they prove the folly of that, by quoting songs from the sixties, or rattling off statistics from their favorite baseball, football, or basketball players. Memory is a method, but it is also a muscle that increases in power, strengthened by using. It is a scientific fact that memorizing scripture will cause your brain to have a stronger memory in other areas. Scientists say, “Use it before you lose it.” Scripture memory is doing due diligence to help do our part to keep our brain fit and working well. But we will never know whether we can store up God’s Word in our hearts until we put down the remote control and pick up our Bible. If you are teaching Sunday School, if you are witnessing, if you are pondering a decision, what happens if you have stored up God’s Word in your heart, it is faster than going to Google. God brings a verse to our mind, because though robbers cannot rob us of what we hide in our hearts, God the Holy Spirit can access it. The prompting of the Holy Spirit often is God the Holy Spirit, who lives within us, accessing or prompting our own memory previously stored and stashed away in our hearts. What God the Holy Spirit brings to our minds is not a miracle, but a prompting of our memory. Thousands of times, as a husband, father, grandpa, superintendent,

neighbor, friend, brother, or a child of God in great need, God has been there for me—God has enabled me to memorize thousands of verses, and He pulls them out of the treasured spot they have in my heart. In the timing of the Lord, and in the prevenient grace of God, His grace that goes before, I find God is already way up the road ahead of me, providing in scripture memory, solutions I will need as I face tomorrow. 4thly,

SCRIPTURE MEMORY IS THE DISCIPLINE OF FOLLOWING JESUS'

EXAMPLE. (IV.) Psalm 119: 11 is clearly a discipline of the psalmist. "I have stored up Your Word in my heart." Maybe, you are willing to admit, scripture memory is God's command, it is my very life, and it requires I store up God's Word in my heart. Yet, I am not convinced. No mere person can convince you. I cannot. The person convinced against their will, is of the same opinion still. You can lead a horse to the water, but you can't make him drink. What holds you back? Is it lazy habits? Is it a preoccupation with sports? You may be saying, "Don't talk to me about scripture memory during the football play-offs." What will it take to light a fire under each of us to hide God's Word in our hearts? What if one of our elders brought into the sanctuary a 50-gallon drum full of \$100.00 bills? Suppose he offered \$100.00 for each Bible verse memorized by next Sunday and recited word perfect. I don't know about your finances, but would any of you start memorizing scripture? Honestly, I believe thousands of believers might still resist. Would you admit that this is a hard message to listen to, because you want to stay away from scripture memory?

One of the greatest incentives to memorize this year is the example of Jesus. I promise you. My desire is to be like Jesus. (1) Jesus used scripture **in his personal life** when He was tempted. In Matthew 4, 3 times, He replied to the devil's temptations, "It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." – Deut. 8: 3 (2) "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test." – Deut. 6: 16. (3) "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve." –Deut. 6: 13. Jesus used scripture memory **in His public ministry**, quoting Deuteronomy 6: 5, in Matthew 22: 37, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind." He quoted Exodus 3: 6, in Matthew 22: 32, saying, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He is not God of the dead but of the living." From Genesis 2: 24, Jesus quoted in Matthew 19: 4-5, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast/cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." Dying, Jesus quoted Psalm 22: 1, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?" As He died, He quoted David's psalm in Psalm 31: 5, saying, "Father, into Your hand I commit My Spirit." I memorize scripture because Jesus did. Fifthly, lastly,

SCRIPTURE MEMORY IS GOD'S PLAN TO SAVE US FROM SINNING. (V.)

Notice Psalm 119: 11. "I have stored up/hidden Your Word in my heart, that I might not sin against You." This is-why this command is your very life. Look back on the

last 5 years of your life. Have you been memorizing the Word? We can each of us say, “I know the Word commands me to forgive, but you don’t know what they did to me.” I know the Bible says be faithful in marriage, but my circumstances are intolerable.” I know God wants me to spend time with Him in the morning, but I am not a morning person. Our excuses don’t save us from sinning, but rather, our excuses pave the way to sin. The road to sinning is paved with good intentions of planning to hide His Word in our hearts, when we get more time. On Friday I read the story of Jeannine Brenner, from Pennsylvania who was full time in church work, and working often from home. Often her husband would call her, “Come see this sunrise,” or “Come see this sunset.” Sometimes, he would say, “Take a break and watch these final two minutes of this ball game with me.” Jeannine would call back, “Let me finish typing this page,” or “I’ll be there as soon as I make this quick phone call.” But the page became 3 pages, and the quick call lasted an hour. She never made her husband a priority. The sunrises and sunsets and ball games were over when she finally joined him. He never complained, but Jeannine missed hundreds of golden opportunities. Suddenly, it was all over. Her husband had a fatal stroke at age 65, and there were no more sunrises, sunsets, or ballgames to watch together. Imagine telling the Lord someday, “I intended to fall in love with You and Your Word, Your love letter to me, and I planned to memorize it, but when I tried to start, it was too late.”

Many of you have heard of Orlando Magic’s co-founder, basketball Hall-of-Fame honoree and sports legend Pat Williams. He announced his retirement in 2019 from the team after a career spanning over 56 years, including 30-plus years with the Magic and 51 years in the NBA. Pat Williams, the general manager of the Orlando Magic basketball team, is a busy man, always under pressure. Nevertheless, he spends 20 minutes a day in uninterrupted Bible study. He also spends whatever time is necessary to memorize one Bible verse every day. He has memorized a verse a day for many years. He testifies, “This is the single most important factor in my spiritual growth.”

Scripture Memory is the deepest well of information we could ever know. It makes meditation possible when we are driving and can’t read the Bible. It strengthens our faith. It makes the Bible portable when we can’t put it in our wallet or purse. Reciting scripture in the middle of the night will often put us back to sleep. It shapes the way we view our sinful world. Scripture memory provides the strongest and the sweetest words when we minister to others. It renews our minds—Romans 12: 2. It purifies our hearts—Psalm 119:9. It helps us learn to know God better—Psalm 119: 10. It provides us with guidance when we need to know God’s will—Eph. 5: 17. It helps us better worship God—John 4: 24. It helps our prayer life—John 15: 7. It transforms our Bible study—II Timothy 2: 15. It protects us from false doctrine—Eph. 4: 14. But hear me as I close today. This is only for those of us who sin—Scripture Memory will keep us from sin. It will keep us from succumbing to temptation. It will be our way of escape that we will be able to overcome sin. (I Cor. 10: 13) I challenge you. I charge you. I plead with you. Hide God’s Word in your heart! I love you all! Amen.