

12 Foundation Stones—Class 1B

Memorizing The Word of God, part 2

Introduction

Testimonies on the power of the Word

"I was in prison, and you visited Me" (Matthew 25:36).—As told by Kristina, missionary in Russia.

Somehow a convicted murderer in a prison in the northern Russian city of Arkhangelsk got my address and wrote to me. In his first letter, he told me about growing up in an orphanage, and the hostility and mistreatment he experienced as a child. Resentment and hatred festered, and he ended up behind bars. A number of religious groups had visited his prison, he explained, but after talking with them he still wasn't even sure that God existed. I wrote him a brief account of the events that led me to know God's love, and we've been corresponding ever since. Following is a translation of an excerpt from his last letter:

"Now I understand that the Bible is a marvelous book. It has all the answers I need and shows the way I was looking for. Jesus is changing me. I don't hate people or get upset with my guards or other prisoners like I used to. Instead, I try to talk to them about Jesus and find solutions to our differences in the Bible. Thank you so much for showing me the light and for giving me Jesus!"

The comfort of the Word!

One spring my mother drove to visit me at college. The highway she had to drive on went through a series of tunnels. Knowing her fear of tunnels, I was concerned about the trip.

"Did you have any trouble?" I asked when she arrived.

"Nowhere but the tunnels," she replied. "One was 2½."

I asked if she meant 2½ miles or 2½ minutes.

Mother's answer was, "Neither—2½ times through the 23rd Psalm."

Section 1: Why Memorize?

We've seen how God's Word has the power to transform lives. It encourages and comforts us in time of need. The Word of God is the foundation of the faith upon which we stand.

In our last class we talked mostly about how to read the Word. We touched briefly on memorizing, and now we'll look at it closer.

The advice we're going to give you on memorizing God's Word can also be applied to anything else you're studying. If you're in need of retaining information for your studies or work, we think you'll find this class to be of help.

Before we go into the practical steps, let's look at a few reasons why we should make an effort to memorize.

➤ **Why memorize?**

For your own spiritual strength and encouragement in the present—renewing your mind in Jesus

God speaks to you through His Word that you have learned

To help you share God's Word with others

A Bible may not be available during the dark days ahead

A weapon in your walk of faith

➤ **For your own spiritual strength and encouragement in the present—renewing your mind in Jesus**

The mind can be compared to a computer database: It has to be filled with something, good or bad. Our reflexes are mentally conditioned to react in a certain way according to what we have been taught or experienced. Jesus, by His Word, spiritually cleanses us and gives us something positive with which to fill it.

Ephesians 5:26b—... with the washing of water by the Word.

Romans 12:2a—Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Psalm 37:31—The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.

Look at the previous verse. If the Word isn't in his heart, his steps will slide, and he'll get off the right track.

Fill your mind and heart with positive, encouraging, strengthening, and faith-building thoughts from God's Word, remembering, memorizing, and quoting to yourself.

➤ **God speaks to you through His Word that you have learned**

The Lord speaks to us by bringing to mind the passages we have memorized.

John 14:26—But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

God knows His own Book better than anybody, and He can bring verses to your remembrance by His Spirit when you need it. If you've faithfully read, studied, and memorized, He'll pop the verses up in your little computer (mind) whenever you make the right connection in your programming. He's the best computer programmer I know, and He's given you the best computer ever constructed!

One reason that memorizing is important is because it isn't always possible to read. Maybe you wake up in the night and you can't turn on the light without disturbing someone. Or maybe you find yourself in a place or difficult situation without your Bible handy. Or maybe you are too sick to read. The only Scriptures you'll have at those times (which could well be the time when you need them most) are the Scriptures you have committed to memory.

It is also easier to claim in prayer the promises that the Lord has made in His Word when we know these promises by heart.

2 Peter 1:4—By which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature.

➤ **To help you share God's Word with others**

Knowing specific passages and Scriptures also helps us in sharing our faith with others, as Peter advised:

1 Peter 3:15b—Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you.

The Lord's Word says that you should be prepared to give answers to those who ask and that you should know the Word:

2 Timothy 2:15—Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing [dissecting] the Word of truth.

There are times that you need to know the Bible and be able to quote it and find Scriptures in order to show them to the person you are speaking with.

➤ **A Bible may not be available during the dark days ahead**

The Bible warns us that in the Last Days there will be a great famine for the Word of God.

Amos 8:11–12—"Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord God, "That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the Words of the Lord. (12) They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the Word of the Lord, but shall not find it.

Some day the only Word of God we have may be what we've implanted in our hearts. Having memorized Scriptures, we will be able to quote them in times of trouble. Nobody will ever be able to take away the Word of God you have hidden in your heart!

➤ **A weapon in your walk of faith**

Hebrews 4:12—For the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

As we're going to talk more about later in the course, a follower of Jesus' teachings will find that his life is not always easy. Jesus Himself suffered opposition—spiritually from the Devil (Matthew 4:1–10) and physically from His enemies. God has given us His Word to use as our spiritual weapon to fight the battles that beset us. It's up to us to memorize and use it.

Section 2: How to Memorize

① *These points can be applied to anything you are memorizing and studying, not just Scripture memorization.*

➤ **Your memory can be developed like a muscle**

The more you use it, the stronger it gets, but lack of use causes it to weaken.

The more you concentrate, the easier it is to memorize

Finding a quiet place, free from distractions, will help a lot.

An unfocused camera gives an unclear picture, and a wandering mind, easily distracted, doesn't get a clear picture of the things it observes, finding them hard to remember. If you give your full attention, then you'll get a good, clear picture of that verse printed on your mind.

➤ **Find the best time for you**

In the morning when you're fresh after waking up, or right before you start your work, is usually best. All you need is 5–10 minutes when you can concentrate without distraction, if possible. Or, try the evenings. The important thing is to find the best time for you. Some people like to start the night before by reading over the verses they want to memorize the next day, so that when they wake up, they're already familiar with them.

➤ **Sight, sound, and action**

Most people remember best what they see, while others remember best what they hear, and another portion best what they do in actual motions. By using all three of these faculties, you can increase your ability to remember. For example, by reading, you use your sight. If you quote your memory work out loud, you hear it too, as well as use your mouth to speak it. Then by writing the same verse to be memorized, it is often better remembered.

Simply, the more involved you become with your memorization, the better you remember it.

➤ **Memory work is work**

It does take a certain amount of determination and self-discipline on your part. Make hiding the Word in your heart a life-long habit! When it becomes a habit, it will get easier.

It's plain hard work to memorize! You have to work at it—like digging a hole or scrubbing the floor or washing the windows or dishes, it's just hard work! You've got to keep repeating and repeating and repeating and repeating! Normally you'll memorize a verse phrase by phrase, that's about the best way to do it.

Don't worry if it seems to take quite awhile, especially at first, to memorize a verse. It's not a contest to see how quickly you can learn. The goal is to get it down, and keep it in your heart.

➤ **The law of memory is repeat, repeat, repeat!**

Set a goal or memory project for each week

So you don't have to decide each day what you're going to learn that day. There are three suggested verses in each class in the Study Notes book. We'll talk more about this in a minute.

➤ **For more memory tips:**

See the Study Notes book, as well as *Activated* magazine 10, pages 12–13.

Section 3: Advice For Memorizing Scriptures

Much of what we've shared until now could apply to anything you want to memorize or study. Now we want to look at a few specifics regarding Scripture memorization.

➤ **Our decision to memorize shouldn't be based on our feelings**

A poor memory can be caused by constantly saying your memory's poor. But "know that you can!" and claim this verse:

Philippians 4:13—I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Another reason we may not get around to memorizing may be simply that we don't always feel like it, but we should memorize no matter how we feel.

Feeling enthusiastic about memorizing verses is great, but it's not a good enough motivation because those feelings may not last or be consistent. Feeling enthusiastic about doing something is a motivation that comes and goes—mostly goes! The motivation that we need to hang on to comes from the facts, not the feelings.

What are some of the facts about memorizing upon which we should base our decision?

God's Word tells us to hide the Word in our heart.

It helps us in our spiritual walk with the Lord.

It helps us to help others.

Some day we're not going to have the Word on paper, and what we hide in our hearts is what's going to keep us.

All those facts are the consistent motivation that we need to be reminded of over and over!

Psalm 1:1–2—Blessed is the man ... (2) [whose] delight is in the law [Word] of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.

➤ **Selecting verses to memorize**

Two important keys to memorizing are:

1. To understand *why* you are memorizing a certain verse; in other words, what is the purpose for memorizing it? To what practical use can you put it?

2. To make sure that you understand the meaning of all the words in the verse you are memorizing.

Often there is a story or supporting passage behind each individual verse you want to memorize, and if you know the context of the verse, you will understand the verse better and be more likely to remember it.

If a verse answers a question you've had, comforts you or helps you through some time of testing, this is the best kind of verse to memorize, as it has special meaning and interest to you and will therefore stick with you the longest.

➤ **How precisely do you need to remember the wording of a verse?**

Some verses have difficult wording. If you have difficulty remembering the exact wording, ponder these points:

When you're quoting a verse to somebody, if you don't remember the verses exactly, you probably will just paraphrase them, and as long as you've caught the spirit of the verse and it means the same, that's fine.

Sometimes when you're praying you really want to get the exact words of the promise to bring before the Lord. But if you can't, you can still pray and claim the promise even if you don't have the exact words. It's just as good to the Lord, because He knows what you're trying to say and the point you're trying to remember.

In conclusion, if you can get the exact wording, that's best, but it's much better to learn something than not learn anything. You don't have to worry too much about having the exact words all the time, as long as you get the general point of the verse.

Don't get stuck with details. If you're going to have the attitude that you haven't learned the verse until you can quote every word exactly right without one mistake, then you're going to spend lots more time memorizing than you need to. You might progress faster if you're a little less precise but learning a greater variety of verses. And eventually, as you review the verses, you'll probably get the wording correct too.

➤ **Learning the references?**

Try if possible to learn the references (the book, and the chapter and verse numbers) along with the verse itself. This will help you in finding the verse later on, which is especially useful when sharing your faith with others.

It's good to quote the Scripture, but if you don't know where it's found in the Bible, you run the risk of the person you're speaking with saying, "Is that really in the Bible? Where is it?" If you don't know and can't show it to them, then how does he know whether you even know the Scripture?

Whereas, if you know the references to key verses, you can show them the verse right out of the Bible. That is actually one of the best ways of teaching others, letting them read the verse themselves.

You will have more confidence to teach others if you know where the important verses are.

If you can learn the references, that is a good thing. However, if having to learn the references is going to discourage you from learning the verses, then it's better not to worry too much about the references.

One thing you can do to learn references is to repeat the reference at the beginning and at the end of a verse each time you quote it.

Another possibility is to at least remember the book that it's in. Then it's fairly easy to find the verse if you need to.

Do you know the way to the post office?

The point is that if you are going to use the Bible as a tool, and you are going to use passages and verses out of the Bible to prove your point or to give the truth to people, if you don't know where those verses are, how are you even going to find them? How are you going to show them to somebody else if you don't even know where to find them yourself?

It would be like the little newsboy on the corner, when the famous evangelist Billy Sunday asked him the way to the post office. After the boy told him, he said, "Okay, now you come out to my meeting tonight, and I'll tell you how to get to Heaven!"—And the tough little newsboy said, "Huh! You don't even

know the way to the post office!"

So if you don't even know how to find the verses in the Bible, how can you purport to be wise enough to tell others how to find Heaven!

➤ **What to memorize**

■ **Individual verses or short passages:**

The *Key Bible Verses* booklet contains a comprehensive list of verses on a variety of topics, ideal for your personal devotional use and for witnessing. Rather than memorizing all the verses on salvation and then moving on to the next topic, it would most likely be best to begin with learning one or two key verses from each category so that you will have a wider variety of Scriptures memorized. Then you can go back and memorize more verses in that section at a later date.

You will also find three key verses in the Study Notes book for each class. If you memorize every verse in the Study Notes book, by the end of this course you will know approximately 75 Scriptures!

■ **Longer passages and chapters:**

The Psalms and certain portions of the Gospels like the Beatitudes in Matthew 5 are wonderful memory projects. Psalms like number 23 (comfort) are all-time favorites.

(As we proceed through the course, you'll be finding out ideas of key chapters to memorize.)

➤ **Reviewing**

If you plan on memorizing a number of verses, you will need an organized system of review. If you don't have a plan and method for regularly reviewing what you have memorized, you will eventually forget the verses.

You can write out your memory verses in a small, sturdy notebook.

If you carry it with you wherever you go, you can pull it out to review in spare moments while waiting, traveling, etc.

If you are memorizing verses from a compiled booklet like the *Key Bible Verses* or from the Study Notes book, you could highlight or somehow mark each verse as you memorize it and this will make it easier for you to find the verses for review.

In a notebook, you can write down the references and first few words of each verse you memorize and then use this for reviewing.

For example:

John 1:12 As many as

John 3:3 Except a man

John 3:16 For God so

John 3:36 He that believes

A seven-day calendar review system can help you retain what you learn.

After you have learned a verse, you should review it twice a day for the next seven days.

One convenient way to keep track of the verses you memorize is by writing them (or at least the reference) in a small diary or calendar. Then each day, take this diary and review the verses, working back seven days.

In addition to this, you should work out a method of reviewing all of the verses you memorize. As your "memory diary" fills up, you could work through the diary's contents week by week. This means, every day you could review whatever you memorized during the previous 7 days, plus another seven days, and gradually work through the year like this.

➤ **Putting your verses into use**

Use the verses you memorize by sharing them with others, through your prayers or witnessing (telling others about your faith).

■ **Scripture songs**

The ease with which most of us remember commercial jingles is one of the proofs of how it is relatively easy to memorize something that has been put to music. Listening to Scriptures that have been put to song is a very easy way to memorize them. You may eventually find yourself humming or singing them to yourself without even having consciously attempted to memorize them.

➤ **Review of main points on memorizing**

If you have time, you can review the main points and tips about memorizing, as follows:

The more you concentrate, the easier it is to memorize.

The best time to memorize is usually first thing in the morning or last thing at night.

Use sight, sound, and action to help engrain the verse into your memory.

Memory work is work and you have to work at it.

"Repetition is the law of memory!"

Memorize and review for short periods, but do it often.

You need to have a plan for reviewing.

Set a goal for what you will memorize each week.

Regularity is a key.

When quoting your verses, try to do it aloud.

Keep on memorizing even when you don't feel like it, or even when it is difficult.

Select verses to memorize that are meaningful for you and that you understand.

Try as much as possible to learn the references, but don't worry too much about it.

While it's good to memorize the verse word-for-word, don't insist on perfection.

Memorize a variety of both individual verses and longer passages.

Use your verses and it will help you remember them.

Review your verses at a steady pace.

Memorize songs of verses that have been put to music.

Concluding prayer

Thank You, Lord, for Your Word and its power. Please do help us all to be faithful to memorize Your Word, so we can quote it for our own benefit and for the sake of others. Help us to meditate on Your Words as we go about our daily lives. Please bring Your Words to our remembrance, when we're traveling or working or lying on our beds at night, so that we never forget You, but keep Your Presence close. Amen.