

bible memory for the church:

Romans 8

Introduction: why memorize God's word?

Say 'memorize' and people often run for the hills, even Christians! For many people, memorizing verses from the Bible can seem like a lot of work and a waste of time. But the reality is, memorizing God's Word is one of the most beneficial activities that we can do as Christians.

When Jesus was confronted in the wilderness by Satan, he reminded Satan of what Moses said long ago: "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God*" (Matt 4:4; Deut 8:3). God's word is the source of the Christian's spiritual life. The Bible is our connection to God. It is the means of our sanctification (John 17:17), it provides direction for life (Ps 119:105), and refreshes our souls, keeping us close to God himself (Ps 19:7-11).

As Jesus demonstrates, God's word is the primary means of fighting against sin. Though he was physically weakened and emotionally drained from his length time of fasting, he still said 'No' to sin (Matt 4:1-11). Jesus could have just said, 'No' to Satan, but as an example to us, he used Scripture in resisting sin. Jesus example is a living example of the teaching we see through God's word: "*I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you*" (Ps 119:11; cf. Ps 119:104; Eph 6:10-20; Heb 4:12). We fight temptation by believing the promises of God. We are empowered to say no to sin, when we follow God's Spirit who leads us to believe the promises God makes to us in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Memorizing the Word gives us immediate access to those promises that we might treasure God more than sin.

Furthermore, memorizing the Word will not just benefit us. Knowing the Bible will allow us to better encourage other Christians, with God's words: "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*" (Col 3:16-17). More than that, it will be an aid to us as we seek to be faithful to Jesus' command to make disciples: "*For 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?*" (Rom 10:14).

Given these benefits of memorizing God's Word, and the example of Jesus himself, how can we not seek to store up God's word in our hearts? In the end, we should follow the example of Jesus and fill up our minds with God's Word. We follow the example of God's people who throughout time have 'stored up God's word in their hearts' so that when temptation comes, we can resist it and pursue godliness by faith.

Romans 8: the greatest chapter in the Bible?

Some Christian teachers over the years have called Romans 8 the "greatest chapters in the Bible." That may or may not be true, but it's not hard to see why many would say that. Romans 8 is a climatic summary of all Paul has been saying in the previous chapters of Romans.

Here, he reminds the Roman Christians that though they are sinful and cannot earn salvation, it has been given to them as a gift of God's free and sovereign grace. Therefore, though we struggle with sin there is no condemnation from God, for Christ himself became condemned in our place. Being adopted as God's sons, we not only have an assurance of salvation and an intimate relationship with God himself, we are also empowered to say no to our sinful hearts by the Spirit. We are not only declared righteous by God (justified), we are now able to become righteous (sanctification). All of this comes to us by faith in Christ, whom God gave for us. Since God gave us Christ—the very best he had to give—he will surely now give to his people all that they need. Despite all the difficulties of this sin-damaged world, God promises to always be with us and even the most trying and powerful things will never separate from his love.

It's easy to see how these truths become the means by which we are built up in our faith, continuing to trust in Christ so that we can say no to sin. If the fight of sin is helped by filling up our minds with God's word, then Romans 8 provides the heavy artillery that we need to make war against flesh and live by God's Spirit.

The plan: memorizing Romans 8 together!

So, if the Bible is clear about the benefits of memorizing, and Romans 8, in particular, is great passage to memorize, then let's work together to hide this portion of God's word in our hearts and minds. This is what the elders are inviting the church to do in 2010—hide the precious truths of Romans 8 in our minds and hearts, that might be better love God, his people, and the world.

In order to do this, we have set up a pretty simple memorization schedule. Many people can get down a verse a day. However, because 1) many people will never have tried this before, 2) we want families—even young children—to be involved, and 3) we want this to be an encouragement to people, we are looking at only thirty-nine verses for the whole year! That means you have about one verse per week for three weeks, with a fourth week to review or catch up. There is a devotional called, *Spirit-Powered Living*, which helps explain the chapter. The better you understand it, the easier it will be to memorize it.

Memorizing God's Word: some advice and strategies

Some of you will have never memorized Scripture in your life. Others of you reading this will have memorized a couple of famous passages (like John 3:16). Most of you will never have taken on the task of memorizing a whole chapter. So how do you even begin?

Remember memorization happens through repetition over time. That's it; that's the key. You simply have to repeat the information again and again over a set period of time. Basically, this means beginning on day one, week one by looking over the verse several times. Specifically, I would recommend no less than ten times. And, don't just read it. Say it out loud as you read, looking at each word individually. Then, try writing it as you say it out loud—anything that helps you use more than one of the five senses at once will be beneficial. However you do it, remember the key to success: repetition over time!

I would also suggest that as you memorize, you say the verse number. This will help you to not drop out verses when you go to recite longer portions of the Scripture. Furthermore, part of the aim of memorizing the Bible is to build up your own faith, as well as the faith of others. There will be times you will not want to quote all of Romans 8. Knowing the verses will help you zero in on the verses you want to recall.

Finally, many people find it helpful to make up for themselves note cards with the passages they are memorizing. This way, they can carry them around, being reminded both of God's Word and of what they are trying to memorize. Simple 3x5 cards are fine, or you can go to www.mcscott.org to print custom cards. We are providing all of the verses on a folded sheet of paper that you could carry around with you, but you may prefer something smaller.

Prayer: ask God to help you

This is God's word that you will be memorizing. Ask him to help you understand it and memorize it. Before you begin each day, and as you review, pray things like:

"Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law" (Ps 119:18).

"Please, show me your glory" (Ex 33:18).

"Help me to hide your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Ps 119:11).

"Give me a hunger for your word" (Matt 4:4).

God's blessings as you seek to store up God's Word in your heart!