

PERSPECTIVE

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HOW CAN I TREASURE THE BIBLE?



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HOW CAN I TREASURE THE BIBLE?



I grew up in Syracuse, New York. So naturally, I was a huge Syracuse basketball fan. I listened to every game on the radio, sometimes late into the night with the volume turned down, so that my parents wouldn't hear. I read every newspaper article after each game so I could be an expert when talking about it with my friends. If Syracuse won the game, I would wear orange the next day in celebration. If Syracuse lost the game, I would wear orange the next day in solidarity.

If someone were to take objective measurements of my fandom—the amount of time, energy, and relationship capital spent—they would rightly conclude that James Chiang treasured Syracuse basketball. Fast forward to today. I may watch 1 or 2 games a year. I still consider myself a fan, but whether Syracuse wins or loses, life goes on. I like Syracuse, but I don't think I can honestly say that I treasure Syracuse basketball anymore.

Christians should treasure God's Word. Do you treasure God's Word? If someone were to look into this current season of your life and see how much time you spend in it, talking about it, and sharing it, would he conclude that you treasure God's Word? Or would he say something different?

In what follows, I want to consider how we can treasure the Bible more. This, of course, will include considering the “nuts and bolts” of the spiritual disciplines. But truly treasuring something isn't

just about discipline. It starts with the desires and affections of our hearts. So, before we get to the “nuts and bolts,” we need to think about why we should treasure God's Word and what it looks like to do so.

WHY SHOULD YOU TREASURE GOD'S WORD?

We should treasure God's word for at least three reasons. First, we should treasure God's Word because *it shows hell-bound sinners like you and me the only way to be saved*. Perhaps you're reading this article, but you are not a follower of Jesus. Thanks for picking it up! I want you to know that the Jesus of the Bible is the most valuable treasure you could seek. In the Bible, the all-powerful God who created everything and everyone has revealed the truth about his perfect and holy character. What you learn as you read through the pages of God's Word is that God created us to know, worship, serve, and live for him. But you also learn that there's a big problem.

Every human being has sinned, choosing to live for and serve self or other gods—like money, sex, power, or the praise of man, just to name a few. And because God is perfectly holy and perfectly just, rebellious sinners like us deserve nothing from him but his wrath. We deserve to be punished eternally in hell. But, in the Bible, you also learn that's not the end of the story.

Despite all the bad news, there's good news. The holy and just God is also a God of mercy, grace, and

love. In love, He sent His son Jesus to earth. He lived the perfect life we could not live. He died the death we deserved to die. And he rose from the dead, demonstrating his power over sin and death. The Bible tells us that if we repent of our sin and turn to Jesus in faith, we will receive forgiveness and eternal life.

Maybe you are reading this article because you are searching for something true and valuable, something that lasts. I encourage you to consider what Jesus said in the book of Matthew, “The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it” (Matt. 13:45–46). Jesus Christ is that one pearl of great value, so valuable that it makes all the sense in the world to lay everything else aside and follow him. Christians treasure God’s Word because it contains the greatest treasure of all, Jesus Christ, and the salvation that is found only in him. I pray you’ll come to treasure him above all else.

If you are a Christian, let me ask you a question. Do you remember what it was like when you first started following Jesus? Do you remember hungering to take in God’s Word and laboring to understand it with your mind? Do you remember how it changed the affections of your heart, how diligent you were to apply it in your life, and how passionate you were to share it with others? Hopefully, that still describes you today. But maybe over time, your passion for God’s Word has waned. If so, let me encourage you to remember your salvation. Remember just how desperately you need Jesus. And, run to God’s Word that you might know more and more of him.

Another reason we should treasure God’s Word is that *God uses it to grow us in our love and knowledge of him*. Think about that for a minute. Our glorious God—the God who created us and saved us—invites us to know and love him more! As we immerse ourselves in God’s Word, we grow in our understanding of the many perfections of our infinite God and the richness of his mercy towards us. That knowledge, in turn, causes us to grow in our love for him. And as we love God more, we long to grow in our knowledge of him by more deeply understanding His Word. Knowledge leading to love, love leading to knowledge. It’s a reinforcing cycle that God designed to play out in the life of a believer to bring him glory and to deliver us safely to heaven (Phil. 1:9).

The third reason we should treasure God’s Word is a sobering warning. We should treasure God’s Word *to keep from drifting away into sin and unbelief*. The author of Hebrews warned his readers, “We must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it” (Heb. 2:1). A little later in the letter, he further explained the danger, saying, “Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today’, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have to come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end” (Heb. 3:12–14). While those who are truly in Christ have no reason to fear losing their salvation, we must recognize the danger of sin. And, how do we keep from drifting away? By paying *much closer attention* to what we’ve heard—by treasuring God’s Word.

The individual Christian pays close attention to God’s Word, so as not to drift from it. But we also treasure it for the sake of keeping others from drifting. We give and receive exhortation from God’s Word to guard one another from unbelief. We arm ourselves with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, to face the reality of the spiritual battle we face every day. Sadly, many of us can think of friends and family members who once professed faith in Jesus, who tasted the goodness of the Word of God, but are no longer following him. That drift often starts with a devaluing and subsequent neglect of God’s Word.

Think for a moment about your favorite verse or Bible passage. How has treasuring that verse or passage served to aid you in your Christian walk? Mine is 1 Peter 5:6–7: “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.” I can be prone to worry. When I do, I pridefully try to plan and control things to solve my own anxieties. This passage helps me remember that God is more powerful than whatever problem I face, that he cares for me, and that in his perfect plan and timing, he will exalt those he loves. It helps me to turn away from the sin of worry, and to put my trust in a God who cares.

Why should we treasure God’s Word? Because it contains the way to salvation. Because it is a glorious invitation to an ever-deepening relationship with our Lord. And because it protects us from falling away.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO TREASURE GOD'S WORD?

One of my daughters' favorite TV shows is called *Junior Bake Off*. In the show, kids aged 9 to 15 tackle a series of baking challenges, competing to be crowned the champion. One of the challenges involves asking the kids to bake something they've never seen before. They're handed a list of detailed instructions, but they're not shown what the final product should look like. Unsurprisingly, the junior bakers' creations often taste and look vastly different from the ideal of what they were asked to make.

I don't know about you, but there have been times in my life when I've felt like one of those junior bakers when it comes to the topic of treasuring God's Word. Over the years, I've received a lot of good, helpful instructions about engaging with God's Word. But I've not received a lot of clarity on what was a command from the Lord and what was merely helpful advice. It's been hard to know whether I'm simply checking a lot of good boxes or truly growing in my faith.

For example, I was told that it was important to read God's Word. That's straightforward enough. But someone would say, "You should do it first thing in the morning." Another would say, "It's okay to do at night." Some days I would read for 15 minutes and feel good, but then I'd feel like a bad Christian if I missed a day or if someone told me they read for 30 minutes a day without ever missing a day.

I was also involved in Bible quizzing growing up. What this meant was that each year from grades 3-12, I would memorize one or more books of the New Testament and compete in quizzing competitions. I remember being puffed up with pride, feeling like I was doing spiritually better than other kids because I could recite those books. But was I really understanding what I had memorized? Was it changing my life the way it should?

Treasuring God's Word is indeed helped by disciplined habits. Treasuring *can* look like reading, listening, studying, memorizing, and meditating. In fact, I'll address each of those disciplines below. But treasuring God's Word isn't fundamentally about the frequency, length, and consistency of doing those activities. Consider Jesus' admonition to a group of unbelieving Jews who diligently studied the Scriptures in John 5:39: "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life;

and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life." It's possible to accumulate vast, intricate knowledge of God's Word and yet not love Christ. So where does that leave us? What does treasuring God's Word look like?

Let's consider what Scripture has to say about the fruit we should expect to see in the life of someone who treasures God's Word. In Psalm 1, David writes,

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. (Ps. 1:1-4)

Notice a few of the key phrases in this passage. The man David describes is someone who:

- *Delights in God's Word.* He has a heart with transformed desires. He is no longer drawn to the things of this world. Rather, he longs for and takes joy in God's Word.
- *Meditates on it day and night.* He has a mind that has been transformed and renewed. Thoughts about God's Word aren't restricted to quiet times and Sunday mornings but rather flood into every part of his life.
- *Rejects the way of the wicked, sinners, scoffers.* He is not merely a hearer of the Word, but a doer of it. He fights sin and lives righteously.
- *Is like a tree planted by streams of water whose leaf does not wither.* He is steadfast even amidst changing circumstances. He bears fruit even in the most difficult trials and sufferings of life.

Paul also gives us a picture of what it looks like to treasure God's Word in Colossians 3:16 when he says, "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." Treasuring the Word looks like:

- *Letting it dwell in you richly.* God's Word isn't like a visiting house guest who stayed with you many years ago. It has taken up

permanent residence in your home and is seated at the head of your dining room table.

- *Teaching and admonishing one another.* Your love for God's Word doesn't remain a hidden secret. It leads you to share the Word with fellow believers in Christ, particularly those in your local church, out of love for them.
- *Singing.* You are so full of thankfulness that you can't help but pour out prayers of thanksgiving and praise. And what's the content of those songs? It's the Word.

So, what does it look like to treasure God's Word? It looks like someone who is growing in their love for Jesus Christ by eagerly inviting God's Word to saturate every facet of her life. It looks like her joyfully submitting to the Word, so that she increasingly bears fruit—transformed desires, a renewed mind, a righteous life, a steadfast faith, a love for God's people, praise to God, and thankfulness to him in prayer. Disciplined habits can be so helpful and important to cultivating this love and these fruits, but before we turn to consider the habits, we must understand that the habits themselves are not ultimately the goal.

Let me give you a couple of real-life examples that help to put flesh on this idea. A young mom may feel guilt and shame that she has not been as consistent in having personal devotions in the morning as she did in prior seasons of life. The result is a cycle of inaction and discouragement. Is the answer to her struggle to set multiple alarms and drink lots of coffee? Maybe. I'm certainly not here to remove what may be the Spirit's conviction to prioritize an early morning devotional. But, it's highly likely that what this young mom needs is to know that there is grace to delight in and meditate on God's Word in other ways. Could she listen to the Word and pray during a late-night feeding? Could she mentally chew on a memory verse while doing chores? Are there other creative ways for her to treasure the Word in this season?

Or, what about a man who is diligent in studying God's Word? He's got a lot of head knowledge. He's eager to teach and admonish others. But, he's not so open to receiving teaching and admonishment *from* others. For this man, treasuring God's Word more could look less like being the first to speak in a class, and more like truly loving God's people by listening, learning, and humbly serving others.

Though the practice of treasuring God's Word may vary from person to person, the goal is the same: A growing love for Jesus that bears much fruit.

HOW CAN YOU GROW IN TREASURING GOD'S WORD?

Any growth in treasuring God's Word is a result of the gracious work of the Holy Spirit. It cannot be manufactured by our effort. But make no mistake, the Holy Spirit intends for us to expend effort! Paul's instruction to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:7 is for every Christian: "train yourself for godliness." Grace doesn't eliminate effort. It fuels it. So, let's consider some ways to apply effort toward the treasuring of God's Word. In doing so, I'll be drawing heavily from the book *Habits of Grace* by David Mathis.

Reading

You may be surprised to hear that there is no explicit command to read the Bible every day. For much of church history, literacy rates were not high, and most Christians did not have access to a personal, complete copy of God's Word. We live in a blessed era and a blessed part of the world. We often have multiple printed copies of the Bible in our homes, and it's digitally available on the phones in our pockets. So even though there isn't an explicit command to read each day, it is undoubtedly a spiritual blessing to be able to do so—one that we should be eager to take advantage of.

Reading the Bible should be as regular and normal for us as eating food, because, like Jesus, we intuitively know we need both to sustain us.

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (Matt. 4:1-4)

If you don't regularly take in God's Word, you should feel hungry and be motivated to feed on it, just as you would with physical food. We would do well to follow the example of the noble Bereans, who were eager to examine the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:10-11).

But sadly, the reality is that many American Christians do not take full advantage of the spiritual blessing of having ready access to God's Word. In 2024, Lifeway Research did a survey of 1,200

Americans about their Bible-reading habits.¹ About 13% said they had read the entire Bible just once. An additional 9% said they'd read the entire Bible more than once. That means roughly 80% have never read the entire Bible. And, what do you think were the main reasons they gave for not reading the Bible more? Twenty-four percent said, "I don't prioritize it." And, another 15% said, "I don't have time."

Modern life is busy. So many things pull on our time. Even when we're alone, we have the world beckoning to us in the form of a phone in our pocket. Yet, it only takes about 70 hours to read the Bible cover to cover. As Donald Whitney explains, "That's less time than the average American spends in front of the television every month. In other words, if most people would change their TV time for Scripture reading, they'd finish reading the entire Bible in four weeks or less. If that sounds unworkable, consider this: In no more than fifteen minutes a day you can read through the Bible in less than a year's time."² Just imagine what is possible if you convert even part of that time to Bible reading or listening on the Bible app. Amidst this sea of busyness, there are several things I would encourage you to do:

- *Use a Bible reading plan.* It could be a plan like *The Navigators Bible Reading Plan*³ or something you set up that works for you and your family.
- *Vary your diet.* Personally, I've found that varying my diet of the Word across genres (e.g., alternating between the Epistles and Psalms) helps me stay mentally sharper and more engaged.
- *Start your day in the Scriptures.* There is no law about what time of day to have a devotional. But I would commend doing your devotional at the beginning of the day, for a couple of reasons. First, it is less likely that something unpredictable pulls you away. You have the most control over when you get up. Second, it grounds you in the truth of the gospel, preparing you to confront the challenges and temptations of the day ahead.
- *Seek accountability.* Invite a brother or sister to regularly ask you about what you are reading. Accountability and transparency are good for the soul.

Listening

We gather each Sunday at Mount Vernon to read the word, preach the word, sing the word, pray the word, and see the word in baptism and the Lord's supper. Sunday morning worship is a prime opportunity to actively listen—to really press God's Word into our minds and our hearts. Are you fully taking advantage of this opportunity to listen? Or do you often let the Word of God go into one ear and quickly out the other?

Here are a few ways to grow in being an attentive listener and to serve others in doing the same:

- *Come prepared to listen.* Follow along with the church card or use Take Up & Read during the week. Know what sermon passage is coming up and read it beforehand.
- *Guard your Saturday evening schedule.* Get a good night's sleep so that you can mentally focus on Sunday morning. Spend some time asking God to help you listen and be changed by His Word the next morning.
- *Minimize distractions.* Turn off the alerts on your phone (or consider putting it away entirely). Have tissues on hand. If you have kids, take them to the restroom beforehand. Train them to sing with the congregation and to sit and listen quietly. If you are someone who is easily distracted by seeing parents get up to take their kids to the bathroom, hearing a baby cry, or hearing a metal water bottle clank to the ground, train your mind to move quickly past these things and be gracious in your thoughts and attitude towards others. Remember, we are all one family. Let's labor to serve one another by laboring not to be distracting and not to be easily distracted.
- *Take notes.* Even if you don't save your notes or pull them out later to go through them, note-taking can be helpful. The task of writing down the points conveyed and any immediate questions/reactions can help you better absorb and retain the truths conveyed.
- *Talk about the sermon.* After the service, ask someone to share what stood out to them, and then share what stood out to you. This is another opportunity to press what you heard deeper into your mind and heart.

Studying

There is a difference between reading God's Word and studying it. David Mathis describes reading as "raking" leaves. When you read, you cover a lot of ground, which is a good thing. We want to expose ourselves to the whole counsel of God. Studying, Mathis explains, is like "digging" to unearth the diamonds underground instead of just raking the surface. We read ("rake") for breadth, you study ("dig") for depth.⁴

One potential downside of using a Bible reading plan is that you can be tempted to treat it like a checklist. We can be so focused on staying on schedule that we don't spend time digging. Brothers and sisters, don't fall prey to this temptation! God's Word is of infinite value. If you speed through it once per year, you will rush right by the diamonds underneath the surface.

What are some simple ways to start digging? I'd suggest buying an *English Standard Version Study Bible* and reading through the footnotes and cross-references as you do your Bible reading. When you come across a word, verse, or passage that you don't understand, write down your questions. Later, you can consult trustworthy resources (i.e., not AI or whatever YouTube link pops to the top of your Google search) to help your understanding.

When it comes to trustworthy resources, consider first the resources that the Lord has provided to you in this local church. Visit the church library, where there are a number of curated biblical commentaries and books that you can reference. Go to the church website (mvpchurch.org/sermons), where you can find every sermon posted since 2008, organized by book of the Bible. As you read a passage, you might re-listen to the corresponding sermon to help you internalize the main message of the text (you can set the speed to 1.5x - it's both edifying and entertaining to hear Aaron/Brad/Dustin/Jeffrey talk fast).

If you stumble upon a new or challenging concept that is causing you to change your understanding of God or a theological topic, please talk to another brother or sister, or an elder, about what you are learning. The shepherds and teachers in the church are a gift from the Lord to help equip you for the work of ministry and to build up the body of Christ.

Studying isn't just a solo activity. When you come to a Sunday school class or an Equipping Matters class, you are studying God's Word along with others. Take advantage of those studying opportunities. The elders and teachers who lead the classes have done

a lot of digging to prepare for those classes, and the questions and comments from those in the class will edify you and help you rightly discern the meaning of texts and theological topics.

Memorizing

My college pastor, Andy Davis, once wrote an article for *Crossway* on Scripture memorization.⁵ In the article, he lists out the top three common excuses that people give for not memorizing Scripture: 1) I don't have a good memory, 2) It will take too much time, and 3) I'm too busy.

The truth is, you have a better memory than you think. Don't believe me? See if you can finish the following:

- Life is like a box of...
- Hey, I just met you, and this is crazy...
- Take me out to the ball game, take me...

Somehow, some way, we find the time to remember movie quotes and song lyrics. I'm not trying to send us on a guilt trip, though. Rather, I have good news. You can memorize the Bible, too! Scripture memorization is not as hard as you think. And it doesn't take as much time as you think.

If you read a verse out loud five times, breaking it up into phrases and reciting each phrase out loud, within five minutes you'll probably be able to recite the whole thing. Repeat this a few days in a row, and you'll be surprised at what you can remember.

And as for being too busy? My guess is that each of us spends at least fifteen minutes a day either on the toilet or in the shower. I once had a friend who laminated sheets of Scripture so he could practice memorizing verses in the shower. With a little bit of multi-tasking and adding nothing incremental to the daily schedule, we just found time to memorize about three verses a day!

But why go through the trouble of trying to memorize Scripture if you already have a physical Bible or the Bible app on your phone? Those are wonderful gifts, but they are no substitute for Scripture memorization. Consider some of the benefits of memorizing the Bible. Scripture memorization:

- *Prepares you to battle against temptation.* When you are attacked by the devil, having your sword at the ready can help you be victorious (Ps. 119:11; Rom. 8:13; Eph 6:17).
- *Equips you for evangelism.* We must always

be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks us for a reason for the hope that is in us (1 Pt. 3:15). When an unbeliever asks you to show him where in the Bible it says that sin deserves death, it can be helpful to have Romans 6:23 on your lips.

- *Equips you to provide wise counsel.* When someone comes to you with a problem and asks for advice, it can be easy to provide counsel based on a vague remembrance of a biblical principle. But, would you rather a surgeon operate on you with a blunt machete or a sharp scalpel? It would be far more edifying to point that person to the very Words of God that you've stored up in your heart and mind.
- *Facilitates meditation.* Life is busy. We all have responsibilities. It's not feasible to have the Bible open in front of us constantly. But if you memorize Scripture, you carry it with you wherever you go and can meditate on it wherever you are.

Meditating

What comes to mind when you think about meditation? Do you picture someone sitting cross-legged, performing deep breathing, emptying her mind of all thoughts to reach a peaceful state? Well, that is not biblical meditation. Biblical meditation is actively thinking about the truths revealed in the Bible to press them into your heart.

David Mathis describes the purpose of meditating as emotionally glorying in what you understand about God's Word.⁶ We don't want merely to understand God's Word intellectually. We want to press it into our hearts so that we believe it, take joy in it, obey it, and burst out into prayer and praise because of it. Through meditation on God's Word, our love for Jesus Christ grows.

Perhaps meditation sounds like a wonderful idea to you, like one of those house projects you hope to get to someday. The Bible actually speaks of it as more than a good idea. God commands us to meditate on his Word (Josh. 1:8; Col. 3:1-2).

What does that look like? Let me offer a few suggestions. After you have read, listened to, and studied a passage, spend time reflecting on questions like:

- What should I praise, thank, or trust God for in light of this passage?

- Should this passage change my attitude about something?
- Does this passage reveal something I need to do differently?

Pondering questions like these presses biblical truth deeper into your heart. Instead of simply accumulating head knowledge, meditation leads us to prayer, confession, and the application of God's Word. It leads us to a deeper love for our Savior. While the habit of meditation may take some work to start and establish, with regular practice, it soon becomes a joy.

Do you see how these disciplines work together to move the truths of God's Word from head to heart? With your eyes and ears, you take in God's Word. With your mind, you study and memorize it. And with your mind and heart, you meditate on it.

Let me offer an example of how I've seen this process at work in my own life. I've really enjoyed our current sermon series in the book of Revelation. In addition to personally reading the sermon passage beforehand, the Chiang family reads it together, too. In Revelation 4, we are given an awesome picture of God's throne room. After hearing and reflecting on Aaron's sermon, I decided to memorize the quotation in verse 8: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" Memorization led to meditation as I pondered the holiness and infinite perfections of God and my own feebleness, fear, and failure to trust God amid difficult circumstances at work. It led me to run to the foot of the cross, confess my sin, and pray for God's help to walk in holiness. And God, in his kindness, answered my prayer that week, giving me strength, hope, and joy. Through reading, listening, studying, memorization, and meditation, the truths of Revelation 4 were pressed into my heart and had a powerful impact on my daily life. And not only that, seeing the transforming power of the Word led me to treasure it all the more.

Getting (Re)Started

I don't know where you are when it comes to treasuring God's Word. But if you're anything like me, you might be feeling a measure of conviction or discouragement. Maybe you struggle in these disciplines, and more than that, you know deep down that you don't love God's Word as much as you should. Maybe for a long time you've struggled to spend time in God's Word, so long that you feel a sense of awkwardness in admitting it to the Lord or to anyone else.

Dear brother, dear sister, if that's you, I urge you not to brush that conviction aside. Don't let awkwardness or an apathetic attitude towards God's Word fester in your heart. Acknowledge the sinfulness, foolishness, and danger of starving yourself spiritually when your Lord offers you a spiritual feast today. Go to the Lord. Confess that you have not loved him with all your heart, soul, and mind. Ask him to forgive you. Ask him to help you grow in your desire to be in His Word. Ask him to help you meditate on His Word each day, as He commands.

God is so gracious and eager to hear and answer these humble prayers. His love for you does not grow, diminish, or depend upon your track record of listening to, reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating on His Word. These disciplines are a gift to us, a means of growing us in our love and knowledge of Him and protecting us from drifting away. Starting today, take one small step forward.

For some, that small step could be simply reading a few verses. I'd recommend starting with John 1:1. For others, it could mean partnering up with a brother or sister to memorize the verses that Aaron's been emailing out each month, then meditating on them as you go through the day.

For those who are doing well in these disciplines, praise God! Keep it up! As you do, you'll be "like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither" (Ps. 1:3). Only be on your guard. Don't let your success in these disciplines puff you up with pride. A humble, growing love for God, the church, and the lost should always accompany growth in the knowledge of God.

We can all grow in treasuring God's Word. So let's humbly ask God to grow our desire and discipline. Let's do this together as a local church—seeking help and accountability from our fellow brothers and sisters. And let's do it to the end that we all may thoroughly know God's Word, and so be complete, equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:17).

- James Chiang

Footnotes

¹<https://research.lifeway.com/2025/05/13/americans-judge-the-good-book-more-positively-but-still-often-by-its-cover/>

²Donald Whitney, as cited in David Mathis, *Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus through the Spiritual Disciplines* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 48.

³<https://www.navigators.org/mk212211-navigators-bible-reading-plan/>

⁴Mathis, *Habits of Grace*, 45.

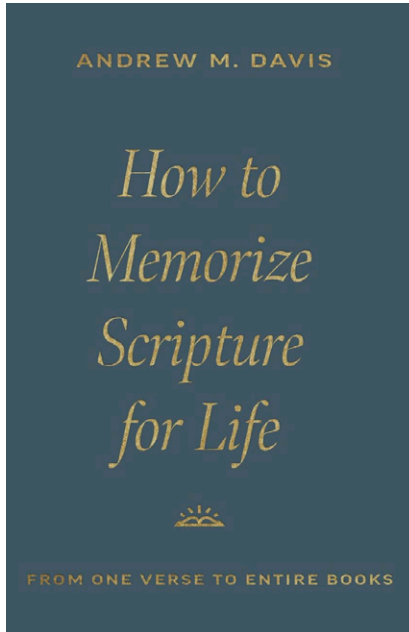
⁵<https://www.crossway.org/articles/9-common-excuses-for-not-memorizing-scripture-and-how-to-overcome-them/>

⁶Mathis, *Habits of Grace*, 45.

BOOK HIGHLIGHT

HOW TO MEMORIZE SCRIPTURE FOR LIFE: FROM ONE VERSE TO ENTIRE BOOKS

Written by Andrew M. Davis | Recommended by Adam Hewitt



How to Memorize Scripture for Life by Andrew M. Davis is a very short and easy read for all Christians who desire to commit God's Word to memory, but think doing so is overly difficult or even unattainable.

Davis starts by making the case that God desires believers to memorize Scripture (John 15:7-8, Col. 3:16, and James 1:22-25). He also explains that Old Testament saints most certainly could not hide the Word in their hearts and meditate on it (Psalm 119:11, 97, 148) if they had not memorized it, since they didn't carry around paper copies of Scripture.

Sadly, but predictably, we tend to make excuses for why we can't commit Bible passages to memory. Davis overcomes these with logic and encouragement. You can remember song lyrics, right? Your memory is better than you give it credit for. Or you might say, "It will take too much time." You make time for what you prioritize, Davis says, and directs readers to consider the blessings on the other side of sacrifice.

While single verses and short sections of Scripture are certainly edifying, this approach to memorizing can prove unwieldy in the long run. Additionally, there's a more significant reason Davis urges moving on to

longer passages (whole chapters and even books): because that's where deeper understanding and richer rewards may be found.

Davis gives practical advice to get those new to Bible memorization out of the gate: Seek God in prayer as to how you should go about the endeavor. Choose a book that the Lord has particularly used in your life. Pick a shorter book to start with so you're not inclined to give up. Davis includes a detailed step-by-step plan in the chapter "Daily Procedures," which I have found especially useful as I have started my own Scripture memorization journey.

How to Memorize Scripture for Life led me to consider Bible memorization afresh and gave me practical techniques to make the process less daunting. Even so, this is not an easy undertaking, as Davis readily admits. If you aren't regularly memorizing Bible passages or struggle in doing so, you should read this book!

BOOK EXCERPTS

When judgment day comes, we will regret the waste of a single moment not used for the glory of Christ. We will, however, not regret one moment we spent diligently studying God's word and hiding it in our hearts. We will only wish we'd invested more time.

- "The Benefits of Scripture Memorization," p. 16

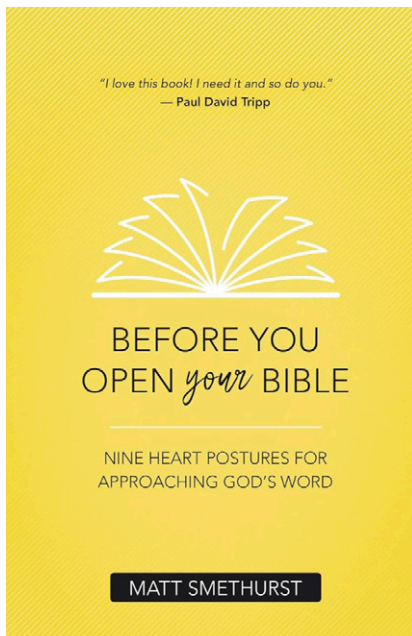
The Holy Spirit will be able to bring back to mind whatever verses he wants to use to convict you of sin, strengthen your heart, or prepare you for witnessing. It's all still there - it's just subterranean now.

- "Kissing the Book Goodbye... To Learn Other Books," p. 41

BOOK HIGHLIGHT

BEFORE YOU OPEN YOUR BIBLE: NINE HEART POSTURES FOR APPROACHING GOD'S WORD

Written by Matt Smethurst | Recommended by Madi Hoppe



In Matt Smethurst's book, *Before You Open Your Bible*, I was confronted and convicted by the nine heart postures that he outlines—postures he encourages us to have each time we reach for our copy of God's Word. These postures include popular ones we hear so often, such as coming prayerfully and humbly with nuances still, but also ones we may need more instruction and practice on such as coming desperately, obediently, studiously. My favorite chapter is the one on approaching the Word joyfully.

Throughout the book, Smethurst uses Scripture itself to show how we should approach the Bible in our pursuit to know it and the God who spoke it. We would do well to take the postures mentioned above, as well as the others covered—coming expectantly, communally, and lastly *christocentrically*—to ready our hearts to hear what the Lord is telling us in our time in the Word. I would argue that, depending on where you are in your pursuit and walk with the Lord, each of these may ebb and flow according to the circumstances of your life and the reason you are reaching for your Bible. Smethurst's idea is that every time we read the Bible, we should steady ourselves before it with each of these postures.

Smethurst does a great job at teaching us not only what postures we should have in approaching the Word, but also gives us advice on how to practice them in our lives. For example, he says we should strive to read the Word in community with one another and not be slow to do so, as it admonishes us and spurs us along in sanctification. Practically speaking, we ought also always seek to read the entirety of Scripture under the arc and understanding of redemptive history, as that is what the Bible is solely about—God redeeming man back to himself for His glory and our good. This book helps us more rightly place ourselves under Scripture's authority and therefore under God's, and who wouldn't want that! *Before You Open Your Bible* is for every Christian who desires to sit under the instruction of the Word of God and who ultimately seeks not only to know it, but to be known by it as well.

BOOK EXCERPTS

Any authentic knowledge of God hinges on his generous self-disclosure to us. Only through his words can we discover who he is, what he's like, what he's after, and how we can know him.

– Chapter 2, p. 19

Biblical obedience is not about keeping an arbitrary set of rules; it's about living in accordance with our design, in harmony with our maker.

– Chapter 5, p. 37

BIBLE READING PLAN

APRIL

TAKE UP & READ

These Scripture readings have been selected to help you prepare for the Sunday morning message. Take Up & Read!

April 1	Acts 1	April 17	Exodus 7:14-19
April 2	Genesis 12	April 18	John 18
April 3	Matthew 28	April 19	Revelation 8:6-9:21
April 4	Hebrews 2	April 20	Revelation 10:1-11:14
April 5	Matthew 28	April 21	Daniel 12
April 6	Matthew 10:34-39	April 22	Zechariah 4
April 7	Hebrews 3	April 23	John 19
April 8	Luke 14:25-33	April 24	Ezekiel 2:8-3:11
April 9	Philippians 3:7-11	April 25	John 20
April 10	Psalms 16	April 26	Revelation 10:1-11:14
April 11	Hebrews 4	April 27	Luke 11
April 12	Matthew 10:34-39	April 28	Hebrews 6
April 13	Revelation 8:6-9:21	April 29	Matthew 6:9-13
April 14	Hebrews 5	April 30	Mark 3:22-27
April 15	Jeremiah 5		
April 16	John 17		

*Sermons in Bold

NEW MEMBERS



ALEX AMARO



LESLIE AMARO



WILL BAKER



ANGELICA BAKER



NOEMI FELIPE



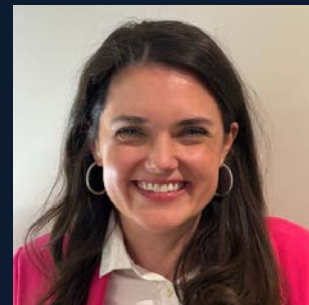
TREY GOODEN



CHRISTINA GOODEN



KEVIN JOHNSON



ANSLEY JOHNSON



WILL KANG



ELIZABETH KANG



JOSEPH LAMBERT

NEW MEMBERS



SENA LAMBERT



MATT MILLER



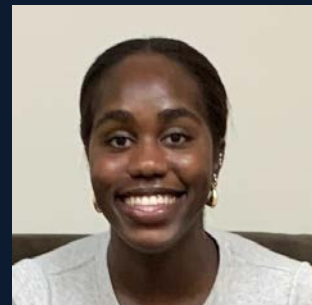
NICOLE MILLER



BILL RODGERS



EVELYN RODGERS



RYENNE ULETT



TRISTEN ULETT

"We must grasp once again, the idea of church membership as being the membership of the body of Christ and as the biggest honour which can come a man's way in this world."

MARTYN LLOYD-JONES



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