

practicing the way scripture

Memorizing Scripture

by Bethany Allen

Why should we memorize scripture?

There's no doubt the scripture played a central and essential role in both Jesus' life and ministry. For Jesus, scripture was not as much tool, instrument, or weapon, as it was part of how he viewed and interacted with both God and the world. As apprentices of Jesus, if we want to live into the fullness of the Kingdom and what God is doing in and around us – we too must be people who know and have the scriptures in us.

Overview

There's no doubt that scriptures played a central and essential role both in Jesus' life and ministry. The study and knowledge of the scriptures for Jesus, measured far beyond academia, to a more personal and compelling reality. All throughout his life and ministry we see him use them in his relationship to teaching, interacting with the teachers or the Pharisees of the day, his disciples, and even Satan himself.

For Jesus, it seems, scripture was not as much tool, instrument, or weapon as it was part of how he viewed and interacted with both God and the world. Both from a historical knowledge of Rabbi's to the account we're given here in the Gospels, we know that the integration of Scripture in Jesus' life was paramount to his work with his disciples and to those around him.

For the disciple of Jesus, some of the greatest transformation we will experience takes place amongst the thoughts in our minds. What you think about will shape what you believe and, ultimately, that will shape what you live into. This is why, in the New Testament, Paul continually tells us to renew our minds – a renewed mind leads to a transformed life.

All throughout church history, disciples of Jesus have pressed into the practice of knowing the scriptures — and more specifically putting to memory the truths of God found on the pages of the Bible.

In meditating and memorizing Scripture, we are not only following the commands found within them but employing the deeper reality and power of those words to combat the lies of the enemy about ourselves, culture, God, political climates, and who our real enemy is. When we harness God's truth in our minds through meditation and memorization, it becomes both a realized and embodied experience.

Practice

As we talk about memorizing Scriptures, the temptation is to believe that we are not, or won't be, good at it. And the truth is, this is a journey, and it will take time to develop the skill of memorization. But it doesn't mean that we shouldn't do it. In fact, it means the opposite. Without the Practice of memorizing Scripture, the enemy has the

ability to deceive us and thwart the truth and, in turn, the good things that God has for us. Memorizing Scripture helps us to learn what the voice of God sounds like. And for the apprentice of Jesus, it is necessary for life in the Kingdom.

You can start with shorter passages you may already be familiar with (e.g. John 3:16, Proverbs 4:5-6, or Psalm 23) or longer passages that are meaningful to you (John 15, Galatians 5, or Romans 12). Either way, keep it simple and start small. And if you learn best when you do something with your hands, it can be helpful to knit, shuffle a deck of cards, squeeze a stress ball, etc. while you quote. The repetitive motion will help you concentrate.

Index Card: Write the verse(s) on one side of an index card and the verse reference on the other side. Carry the card around with you so you can work on memorizing in your free time.

Record Yourself: Try recording yourself on your phone reading the verse(s). Listen back to the recording while you're driving, working out, cleaning your house, grocery shopping, etc.

Make It Visible: Tape the verse(s) to the bathroom mirror or to your car dashboard and work on it as you go about your day. You can also put it as your desktop or phone background. You'll honestly be surprised by how much that helps.

Repetitive Writing: transcribe the verse(s) by hand. Rewrite the verse(s) over and over or use hand-lettering or other creative illustrations or pictures as way of putting it in your mind.

Repetitive Recitation: Read the verse(s) out loud in 5 minute increments and repeat (while allowing some time for your mind to rest). Worked out as a discipline, this could look like:

- Reading/Reciting it out loud 4 times per day for a week
- Then, read/recite it out loud once a week for a month
- Then read/recite it once every three months for a year
- And then read/recite it once every year

Think through which of the above Practices you want to try this week – which verse(s), when, where, how. Then spend a few minutes praying, asking God to help you make time and press into the Practice, remembering that the devil attacks that which God is after most. If we are in Christ, we have the mind of Christ, which is constantly being renewed and transformed. So as followers of Jesus, we want to be actively engaging our minds in ways that are worshipful and intentional. Perhaps even consider inviting another person in your Community to help keep you accountable to your commitment.

The Practice for this week is fairly simple. Take the time to work through the above Practice that you selected. Determine what you need to do ahead of time to be successful in your commitment. Whether it means buying index cards or a stress ball, take the practical steps you need to to make it happen.

Closing Questions

1. What do you think about meditating and memorizing Scripture? Is this something you already do? Have you ever done this before? When?
2. Any thoughts, creative ideas, or feedback on this coming week's Practice? Is there anything new you want to try? Or something that has been helpful to you in the past that you'd like to share?