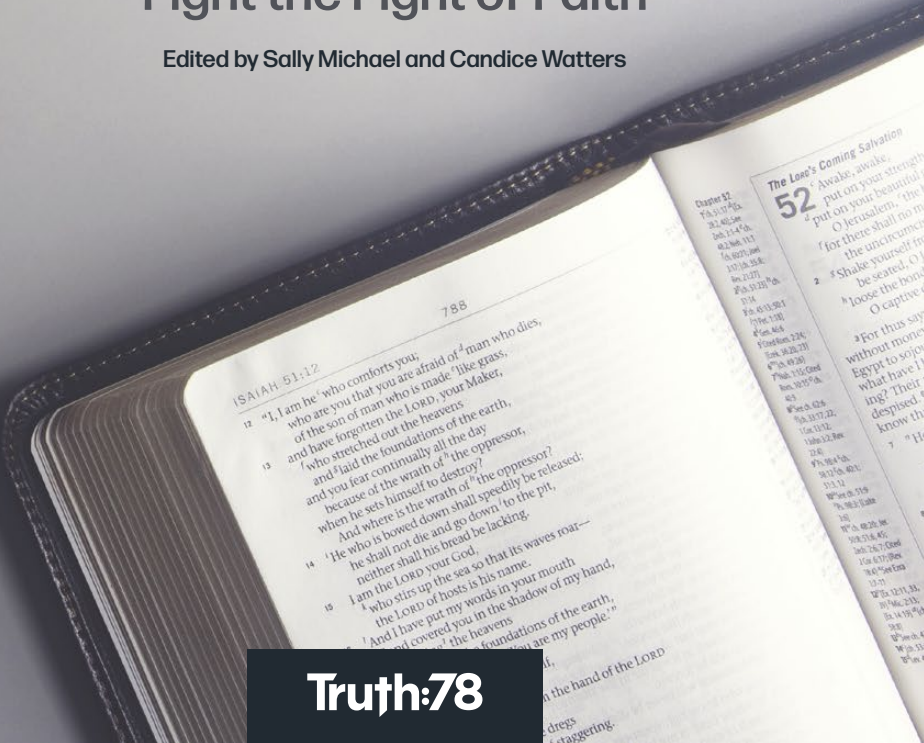




# Hidden in My Heart

Memorizing Scripture to Fight the Fight of Faith

Edited by Sally Michael and Candice Watters



Truth:78

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*Hidden in My Heart: Memorizing Scripture to Fight the Fight of Faith*

Edited by Sally Michael and Candice Watters

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# Truth:78

*Equipping the Next Generations to Know, Honor, and Treasure God*

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# Preface

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The day started out wonderfully. We got an early start on our trip from Minneapolis to Chicago. My husband David and I (Sally) were looking forward to attending a conference, and our two daughters, Amy and Kristi, were excited about spending a few days with their cousins. The atmosphere in our 1982 Pontiac Bonneville station wagon was jubilant—until we heard a clunking sound. The car shuddered and the engine sputtered as we slowly made our way off the highway exit and came to a standstill. There were furrowed brows and lots of anxious questions. The atmosphere was tense. After examining the engine, David said what threatened to squelch any remaining remnant of the once-jubilant mood, “I think we threw a rod. I’ll have to walk to find help.” (This was in the days before cell phones.)

“Threw a rod” did not sound like a simple fix. In fact, it sounded serious. David started walking to find help while the two girls and I stayed in the car shivering as the car cooled down to match the single-digit Wisconsin temperature. It slowly sank in that Chicago was a lost dream and we would not be getting there any time soon. One daughter started crying. The other was visibly upset. All their plans were spoiled.

How does a mom or dad redeem a situation like this?

Our Bibles were packed away in our suitcases, but we had been memorizing Scripture since the girls were in preschool. Now at elementary school age, the girls had an arsenal of “Fighter Verses” that could preach to their souls. So I asked them, “Do you know a Fighter Verse that could help us in this situation?”

One of them dolefully sighed, “I suppose Romans 8:28. ‘All things work together for good.’” This was a fitting verse, but they had not yet caught its reality. “Are there other verses you can think of?” I asked.

One by one they started reciting verses, and little by little their mood changed. Granted, they weren’t jubilant, but they grew expectant. After quoting about 25 verses, one of the girls blurted out, “I wonder what God is going to do in this situation?” In a matter of minutes, I had watched the Word of God transform their hearts from anxious frustration to hopeful expectation.

What did God do? Well, we had the car towed to a garage, the girls got to spend a few hours in a local public library reading some favorite books, and people from our church attending the same conference stopped and picked us up with enough room in the van for all four of us. But best of all, our family witnessed God's faithfulness, wisdom, and goodness. His Word is powerful and heart-transforming.

Why did our daughters' perspectives change? Because Scripture was a ready and true witness to our souls. We didn't have our Bibles in our hands—they were still packed in our suitcases. This happened because we had verses in our hearts.

I am very much aware that Scripture memorization has largely fallen by the wayside in our day...But let me say as graciously but firmly as I can: We cannot effectively pursue holiness without the Word of God stored up in our minds where it can be used by the Holy Spirit to transform us...I know it requires work and is sometimes discouraging when we can't recall accurately a verse we have worked hard to memorize. The truth is, however, all forms of discipline require work and are often discouraging. But the person who perseveres in any discipline, despite the hard work and discouraging times, reaps the reward that the discipline is intended to produce.”

—Jerry Bridges<sup>1</sup>

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1. Jerry Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace: God's Role and Our Role in the Pursuit of Holiness*. (Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress, 1994), 175.



## Chapter 1

# Reviving Scripture Memory

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“Scripture memorization has largely fallen by the wayside in our day...”

—Jerry Bridges

Some things *should* go by the wayside—things like ‘70s platform shoes and jumpsuits for men; Victorian jewelry, pictures, and art made from human hair; and creamed tuna and peas on toast. (Surely we’re not alone on that last one.)

Though some fading trends are a welcome relief, the waning of Scripture memory is a tragic loss. Sadly, the decline Jerry Bridges observed in 1994 is even more pronounced today. What has your experience been? Does your church encourage Scripture memory for children *and* adults? Do your Christian friends work at memorizing verses and encourage you to join them? Is Scripture memory a regular practice in your home?

If you can answer *yes* to these questions, thank God for your community. You are in a rare place. Still, the question remains: are we untroubled that a discipline that helps us pursue holiness is so rarely encouraged, supported, or given a place of prominence in the church? Yes, some things *are* worth leaving behind, but memorizing God’s Word is not one of them.

## A Perspective on How We Got Here

Memorizing Bible verses encourages our faith, helps us fight sinful desires, deepens our understanding of God and His Word, informs

our prayers, and fuels our witness to unbelievers. How is it possible that such a helpful habit—an essential spiritual discipline—is largely missing in our churches and homes?

A quick look at education trends offers some clues. Generations ago, memorization was an integral part of teaching. Children regularly memorized poetry and math tables by reciting them aloud. The presidents of the United States, state capitals, the periodic table, and famous speeches were committed to memory. That all changed around the time people were wearing bell bottoms. Schools moved away from rote memory work to group projects and perceptions-based instruction. Then computers, the internet, and smartphones made memorizing nearly obsolete. Regrettably, the church has followed the same trend. Why memorize a verse when you can just “google it”?

In the past 50 years, our schools have traded memorization for “higher” forms of learning such as critical thinking and problem-solving. While these are important skills, without first filling minds with vital information, there’s nothing to think critically about. A person’s mind must feed on ideas before he can draw conclusions and form convictions. In our day, information is coming at us from all sides, but there is little encouragement to linger over the ideas it contains. How much less are we encouraged to think deeply, unhurriedly about God’s Word—to consider its truthfulness, meaning, and significance, or to discern how it applies to daily life?

## **Memorization Makes Meditation Possible**

The failure to linger is the reason why many fail to remember or find their hearts warmed by the fire of God’s Word.  
—Donald Whitney<sup>2</sup>

Professor of Biblical Spirituality at Southern Seminary, Donald Whitney laments the neglect of Bible memory for what it costs a Christian’s heart. He echoes the psalmist in Psalm 1:1-3,

*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*

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2. Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*. (Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress, 1991, 2014), 49.



*its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.*

Do you want to be blessed by the Lord? To live a fruitful and godly life? To know God intimately and walk in sweet communion with Him throughout your day? Psalm 1 tells us how to do that: meditate on God's Word, day and night.

The Hebrew word translated *meditate* means to speak or mutter. To meditate on God's Word means to speak it to yourself throughout the day. The way to do this is not by simply passing the words of the Bible through your mind briefly as you read it, but by memorizing Scripture. Memorization makes meditation possible. A memorized verse can hum in the back of your mind all day. When your thoughts wander, the memorized Word is there as a familiar route to follow, bringing your thoughts back to fruitful paths. The more you consider a verse, rolling it over in your thoughts, the deeper its meaning goes, not only into your mind, but also by God's grace, into your heart. This is how God encourages our hearts, informs our decisions, strengthens our convictions, and deepens our relationship with our heavenly Father. The memorized Word speaks to a Christian's soul as his mind recalls it. The Holy Spirit uses the Word to shape how believers think and how they live.

Without meditation, we have "minds like sieves," says author Lou Priolo. He explains the importance of Scripture meditation in his book, *Teach Them Diligently*, where he paraphrases Puritan preacher Oliver Heywood:

Lack of meditation is the primary reason that so many professing Christians, in spite of exposure to the most excellent teaching, still remain ignorant, unstable, and unfruitful, "ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." Instruction flows in upon them from all sides; but their hearts and minds are like sieves, out of which everything runs as fast as it is poured in. The impressions which truth makes on their minds are as temporary as characters traced on the sands of the seashore, which the next wave erases forever. But meditation imprints truth deeply on the conscience, and engraves it on the tablets of the inner man, as with the point of a diamond or laser beam. It thus becomes incorporated into the soul; and forms, as it were, a part of it; and

it is ever present, to regulate the heart's affections and to control and guide all of its movements.<sup>3</sup>

Priolo goes on to add his own thoughts to Heywood's:

Meditation fastens into our hearts truths which we received but have not yet assimilated into our character. Meditation is a means the Spirit of God effectively uses to permanently amalgamate into our character that truth which previously we may have only received intellectually or superficially—truth that had not yet been digested and become a part of our makeup.<sup>4</sup>

The Holy Spirit does not work in a vacuum. He works through the divinely inspired Word. When you memorize God's Word, you can practice the sort of day and night meditation David extols in Psalm 1. Meditation leads to insights you would otherwise miss. The Holy Spirit is faithful to bring situations into our lives to show us the truthfulness and wisdom of God's Word. As we ponder Scripture, it becomes the beliefs and convictions we internalize and the measure by which we discern other ideas and philosophies we encounter. Most importantly, as you meditate on God's Word and accept it by faith, you meet God.

## **A Soldier in the Fight**

*I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, (Philippians 2:25)*

Paul describes Epaphroditus as his brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier. *Brother* and *fellow worker* make sense. As believers in Jesus, Paul and Epaphroditus were children of God (John 1:12) and therefore, the two were brothers. Their shared partnership in advancing the gospel made Epaphroditus a fellow worker with Paul. But *fellow soldier*? Why did Paul call him that?

Elsewhere he tells us they were “engaged in the same conflict” (Philippians 1:30), fighting not “against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12), and “keep[ing] alert with all perseverance”

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3. Lou Priolo, *Teach Them Diligently: How to Use the Scriptures in Child Training*. (Stanley, N.C.: Timeless Texts, Inc., 2000), 86-87.

4. *Ibid.*



## Chapter 4

# Practical Tools for Memorizing

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“How do you memorize Scripture? First of all, by praying for discipline and setting aside time.”<sup>28</sup>

—John Piper, *Ask Pastor John*

Asking God for help and making a plan for Bible memory sounds basic enough, but they’re essential first steps. Left to ourselves, even the best intentions to memorize wane. We need supernatural help to grasp the meaning of the words we’re working at remembering. Paul said, “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Once God gives us the desire to memorize, we still need to block off time to do it. Where can time to memorize be found? King David sought God in the night when he was upon his bed (Psalm 63:6) and early in the morning (Psalm 119:147). Job rose early to pray (Job 1:5). Whether morning or night, Jesus went off by Himself “to desolate places [to] pray” (Luke 5:16). Most English translations say He did this *often*. If Jesus needed time alone to listen to His Father’s words, how much more do we! God’s Word is our very life (Deuteronomy 32:47).

Setting aside and protecting time to memorize is essential and can make the difference between good intentions and the transformation that comes from being immersed in God’s Word. Thankfully, it doesn’t take long hours to memorize. What’s key is a routine, a “settled pattern”

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28. John Piper, “How Do You Memorize Scripture,” *Ask Pastor John*, August 31, 2006, [desiringgod.org/interviews/how-do-you-memorize-scripture](https://desiringgod.org/interviews/how-do-you-memorize-scripture)

of Scripture memory, says Andrew Davis, author of *An Approach to Extended Memorization of Scripture*.

## A Little Over a Long Time

Read and repeat for a short time every day. That's the simple approach Davis recommends. He has successfully used this method to memorize not only verses, or even chapters, but whole books of the Bible.

"Saying a verse one hundred times in one day is not as helpful as saying it every day for one hundred days," says Davis. "The absolute key to successful Scripture memorization is repetition over a long time period."<sup>29</sup>

"If you repeat a verse by memory once a day for 100 days, it will be in your permanent long-term memory," writes Jon Bloom.<sup>30</sup> Verses can be easily memorized and retained with an investment of only about 10 to 15 minutes each week. If you invest a few more minutes, you can retain hundreds of previously memorized verses. A sample schedule looks like this:

### Sunday

Read the week's passage to be memorized with surrounding verses so you can see it in its context. Ask the Lord to help you commit the passage to memory, apply it to your life, and use it to bless others.

### Monday

Read the passage with the reference 10 times aloud. Then cover the passage and say it aloud with the reference 10 more times, looking if necessary. Say each memorized passage from previous weeks one time aloud with references.

"Each time you say it, emphasize a different word," suggests John Piper, using Romans 8:1 as an example:

There *is* therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ. There is *therefore* now no condemnation for those who are in Christ. There is therefore *now* no condemnation for those

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29. Andrew Davis, *An Approach to Extended Memorization of Scripture*, (Durham, N.C.: FBC Durham), 15. [scripturememory.com/products-resources/resources/free-downloads#](http://scripturememory.com/products-resources/resources/free-downloads#)

30. Jon Bloom, "Ten Reasons to Memorize Big Chunks of the Bible," May 16, 2014, [desiringgod.org/articles/ten-reasons-to-memorize-big-chunks-of-the-bible](http://desiringgod.org/articles/ten-reasons-to-memorize-big-chunks-of-the-bible)

# Fighter Verses

## By Topic

### Anger

- Proverbs 16:32
- Proverbs 19:11
- Proverbs 29:1, 11
- Ephesians 4:26
- James 1:19-20

### Anxiety

- Psalm 55:22
- Romans 8:31-32
- Philippians 4:6-7
- 1 Peter 5:6-8
- 1 John 4:4

### Contentment

- Proverbs 22:1
- Philippians 4:11-13
- 1 Timothy 6:6-7
- Hebrews 13:5-6

### Depending on Christ

- Matthew 11:28-30
- 2 Corinthians 12:9 [10]

### Discipline

- Proverbs 3:11-12

### Endurance

- 1 Corinthians 15:58
- Hebrews 12:1
- James 1:2-3
- James 1:4-5
- James 1:12

### Eternity

- John 14:2-3
- 1 Corinthians 15:51-52
- Revelation 21:3
- Revelation 21:4
- Revelation 21:5-6 [7]

### Faithfulness of God

- Deuteronomy 7:9
- Psalm 34:15-16
- Psalm 34:17-18
- Psalm 86:5-7
- Psalm 100:4-5
- Isaiah 46:3-4
- Philippians 4:19

### Fear

- Joshua 1:9
- Psalm 27:1 [2-3]
- Psalm 56:3-4
- Psalm 118:5-8
- Isaiah 41:10
- Isaiah 43:1-3
- Matthew 10:28
- 2 Timothy 1:7

### Forgiveness

- Isaiah 43:25

### Generosity

- Proverbs 3:9-10
- Matthew 6:19-21
- Luke 12:32-34
- Acts 20:35
- 2 Corinthians 9:6-7
- 2 Corinthians 9:8

### God's Goodness

- Psalm 34:6-8
- Psalm 84:10-11 [12]
- Psalm 103:1-4
- Psalm 103:5-7
- Psalm 103:8-10
- Psalm 103:11-14
- Psalm 103:15-16
- Psalm 103:17-19
- Jeremiah 32:40
- James 1:17

### Gospel

- John 3:16-17
- Romans 1:16 [17]
- Romans 3:23-24
- Romans 5:8
- Romans 6:23
- Romans 10:13-14 [15]
- 1 Corinthians 15:1-3
- 2 Corinthians 5:21
- 1 Timothy 1:15
- 1 Peter 2:24
- 1 Peter 3:18

### Guidance

- Psalm 23:1-2
- Psalm 23:3-4
- Psalm 32:8 [9]
- Psalm 37:23-24
- Psalm 86:11
- Psalm 139:23-24
- Proverbs 4:25-27

### Humility of Christ

- Matthew 20:26-28
- 2 Corinthians 8:9
- Philippians 2:5-7
- Philippians 2:8-9

### Joy

- Psalm 16:11
- Proverbs 17:9, 22

### Life in Christ

- John 5:39-40
- John 6:35
- John 10:10
- John 11:25-26
- John 14:6
- John 15:5
- John 15:7
- Romans 12:9-10
- Romans 12:11-13
- Romans 12:14-16
- Romans 12:17-19
- Romans 12:20-21
- Romans 15:1-2
- 2 Corinthians 5:17
- Galatians 2:20
- Galatians 6:9-10
- Philippians 1:21
- Colossians 3:1-3
- 1 Thessalonians 5:14-17
- 1 Peter 2:9-10 [11]

### Love

- Lamentations 3:21-23
- Lamentations 3:31-33
- 1 John 3:1 [2]