

The W's And H's Of Meditation (Part Six)

The Case for Scripture Memorization

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We will be turning to several related scriptures upon which I intend to weave a theme for this message. All scriptural references will be taken either from the Lockman Foundation's *Amplified Bible* or the Lockman Foundation's *New American Standard Bible* or *New American Standard Bible E-Prime*.

Psalm 119:11 (AMPC) Your word have I laid up in my heart, that I might not sin against You.

My specific purpose for this message will be to continue where I left off in Part Five to provide some practical memory and meditation skills to plant the Word of God deep within our nervous systems so we will continually provide nourishment to the earnest down payment of God's Holy Spirit, enabling us to harvest an abundant crop of the fruits of righteousness—the mature fruit of God's Holy Spirit, the DNA of our glorified spiritual bodies following our life-long sanctification process.

Genesis 2:15 (AMP) And the Lord God took the man put him in the Garden of Eden to guard and keep it.

The wording with which most of us are familiar is “dress and keep,” unlocking the perennial biblical principle that we must be responsible stewards of the gifts which God has given us, whether they are physical, psychological, or spiritual. We have a God-given responsibility to cultivate the mind as well as the soil. As Dr. Don Ward has explained in Doctrines class, the artificial bifurcation between physical and spiritual sins (as some have mistakenly interpreted in their understanding of the symbols of the bread and the wine during the Passover) is patently false. All sin (from gluttony to first degree murder) is spiritual transgression, whose penalty is death. Please turn over to what some have called the Proverbs of the New Testament, the book of James.

James 1:21 (AMP) So get rid of all uncleanness and all that remains of wickedness, and with a humble (gentle, modest) spirit receive the word [of God] which is implanted [actually rooted in your heart], which is able to save your souls.

This is clearly an agronomy or horticultural lesson on the spiritual plane. We are aware that James's half-brother Jesus had metaphorically described the Word of God as seed in the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13, the same location we read about the enemy's tares.

James 3:18 (AMP) And the harvest of righteousness (of conformity to God's will in thought and deed) is [the fruit of the seed] sown in peace by those who work for and make peace.

We could make a convincing case that the harvest of righteousness and the fruit of the seed sown in peace described by James is none other than the fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23, while the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21 refer to the tares which Satan has sown among the good seed in Matthew 13:27-28. Further substantiation that James' reference to the harvest of righteousness is equivalent to the harvest of the fruits of the Holy Spirit we can see in James 4, beginning with verse 5:

James 4:5 (AMP) Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"?

What Jesus' brother James describes in verse 5 is equivalent to what the apostle Paul describes in Ephesians 1:14 as the earnest down payment or deposit of our inheritance or His seal of ownership on us in II Corinthians 1:22. Almighty God desires a return on His investment of the little dab of Holy Spirit He has placed within us at our baptism. To use a modern metaphor, God has planted within our hearts a spiritual genotype. The genotype is the set of genes in our DNA which is responsible for a particular trait. God is patiently awaiting a phenotype, that is, the composite of an organism's observable characteristics or traits.

An orange pip, for example, contains the complete genotype (the genetic code) which will grow systematically into a full-sized orange tree, able to bear succulent fruit. Not so long ago, in another fellowship, I was castigated by one individual for not using biblical examples exclusively in my messages. I replied to him that while Jesus used hundreds of biblical examples, prefaced by “it is written” in virtually all the Kingdom parables, He used fresh, non-biblical metaphors (at least they were not yet when He used them)-mustard seeds, leavening, pearl of great price hidden in a field, or a dragnet, all similes and figurative expressions familiar to the agrarian society to which He preached.

Likewise, Jesus’ brother James and the apostle Paul used fresh figurative expressions from human anatomy, the building trades, and athletic metaphors to drive home his point. Paul even created a new context for an Old Testament prohibition for muzzling the ox to promote the principle that a laborer deserves to be paid (I Corinthians 9:9 and I Timothy 5:18). In II Corinthians 3:2, Paul claimed that members of the Corinthian congregation were his metaphorical letters of recommendation or epistles written in their hearts to be known and read by anybody.

Both Ambassador and Living Universities proclaimed that the Bible is the foundation (not the totality) of all knowledge, enabling us to live our lives, building our experiences, and developing our emerging character by applying infallible biblical principles. But to denigrate and ignore the precious lessons of our individual experiences in the inculcating biblical principles negates the whole purpose for overcoming, character building, and sanctification.

In this sixth and penultimate installment of the “W’s and H’s of Meditation,” we will return to the subject of the laws of memory, encouraging the systematic memorization of Scripture to stockpile within our nervous system, supplying enough nutrients to turn the genotype (the earnest payment of God’s Holy Spirit) into a fully mature spiritual phenotype, a veritable member of God’s very Family.

In part five of this series, I reiterated that the three laws of memory consist of (1) Attention (or Impression), (2) Repetition, and (3) Association. Again,

both meditation and memorization employ all three of these laws as it enables hiding God's precious Word deep into our hearts or nervous systems, as revealed by David in Psalm 119:11. The admonition to remember is one of the most dominant themes in both the Old and New Testaments. Please turn over to a very familiar scripture in Deuteronomy 6:4, the Shema:

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (AMP) Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord [the only Lord]. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your [mind and] heart and with your entire being and with all your might. And these words which I am commanding you this day shall be [first] in your [own] minds and hearts; [then] you shall whet and sharpen them so as to make them penetrate, and teach and impress them diligently upon the [minds and] hearts of your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand (symbolizing our deeds or works), and they shall be as frontlets (forehead bands) between your eyes (symbolizing our thoughts). [We remember Jesus' brother James proclaiming that faith (a mental activity) without works (a physical motor activity) is stone dead. That reference was James 2:17]. And you shall write them upon the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

All such activities demand an intense, rigorous discipline of memorization using physical mnemonic (memory stimulators). The phylacteries and mezuzahs, Torah scrolls, and laws carved on stone may provide powerful mnemonics (memory stimulators) to remember God's law, but as Charles Whitaker pointed out in his March 24th sermon, "Lessons From Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim," if God's law has not been written in our hearts (Hebrews 8:10, 10:16, and Jeremiah 31:31-35), completely altering our thoughts and behavior, the corporate entity in which we find ourselves will not save us from the wrong side of the judgmental cut no matter how many physical reminders (paper, electronic, metallic, or stone) we have to keep God's law. Let us move ahead to Deuteronomy 8.

Deuteronomy 8:1-3 (AMPC) All the commandments which I command you this day you shall be watchful to do, that you may live and multiply and go in and possess the land which the Lord swore to give to your fathers. And you shall [earnestly] remember all the way which the Lord your God led you these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and to prove you, to know what was in your [mind and] heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. And He humbled you and allowed you to hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you recognize and personally know that man does not live by bread only, but man lives by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.

Now let us go over to the scripture we read every Passover.

John 14:26 (AMPC) But the Comforter (Counselor, Helper, Intercessor, Advocate, Strengtheners, Standby), the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name [in My place, to represent Me and act on My behalf], He will teach you all things. And He will cause you to recall (will remind you of, bring to your remembrance) everything I have told you.

We understand that synonyms for the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth (John 14:17) and the mind of Christ (I Corinthians 2:16). As I have repeatedly told my students for the past 50 years, when they audibly pray for the answers to be revealed to them on a test, God's Spirit will certainly bring things to remembrance, but only if you have stashed them into your nervous system, your mind, or your heart in the first place. We all have been granted the gift of life with opportunities to make time deposits from our accumulated experiences and memories. We could while away our time playing shuffleboard or pitching horseshoes, playing video games, or watching cable news (an utter waste of precious time), or we could do something more constructive with our precious time deposit accounts.

Returning to James 1:20-21, Jesus' half-brother cautions us against allowing ourselves to become uncontrollably angry or emotionally out of control warning us:

James 1:20-21 (AMP) For man's anger does not promote the righteousness God [wishes and requires]. So get rid of all uncleanness and the rampant outgrowth of wickedness, and in a humble (gentle, modest) spirit receive and welcome the Word which implanted and rooted [in your hearts] contains the power to save your souls.

Implanting the word which can save our souls requires quality time in the twin processes of meditation and memory. Over the past 50 years, I have had conflicted feelings about memorization as a practical tool of learning, but over this last year, I have come to treasure memorizing as metaphorically cutting fuel for lengthy hours of biblical meditation in which I may not have an electronic Bible or a paper Bible close. As a fourth grader, I learned the practicality of memorizing the multiplication tables from 1x1 to 12x12, a skill largely intact, but has suffered a degree of deterioration after I purchased my first electronic calculator. The spell-checker and the grammar checker have also caused some pesky mental laziness.

Back in college in 1965, my German professor, Manfred Poitszch, insisted that we memorize prodigious quantities of Goethe, Schiller, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. To this day, I have not forgotten one word from these any of these passages. In 1969, in the Duluth Spokesman Club, I recall a speech given by one of the deacons in the congregation, in which he lampooned an acquaintance who had memorized Paul's epistle to the Romans, calling it an exercise of intellectual vanity, referring to memorizing this book as his religion. Regrettably, I made a mental note at the mature age of 25 not to ever try anything that 'foolish' and 'unproductive.'

At Ambassador College, both Richard Ames and Dean Blackwell had encouraged students to memorize hundreds and hundreds of scriptures, many of which became confrontational "gotcha" proof texts, promoting a "one-upmanship" vanity either among fellow students or toward some unwary Baptist or Methodist victim. I myself assembled a formidable arsenal of

“proof texts” for which I can never say that I won friends or influenced people. I Corinthians 8:1 cautions us that all knowledge, including godly or biblical knowledge, has the tendency to puff us up, giving us the big head.

In August of 1986, Greg Hutchison was appointed choir director of the North Hollywood congregation. Initially, I was not on board of his practice of having the choir members learning their parts by heart, but I felt very empowered after we performed a rendition of Psalm 103 with the memorable words, “The Lord pities His children, knowing that we are dust.” To this day, because of Greg’s insistence on memorizing, this musical selection has burned permanently into my memory.

In September of 1989, I had the opportunity of playing clarinet in the Glendale College Band which was conducted by my dear friend Dave Hoover, who served as interim conductor. At one point, Dave held up the musical score, proclaiming that the notes on the score did not constitute “the music.” The music is what we internalize and produce.

In August of 1993, Dr. Don Ward, in his Doctrines class, had us memorize an extensive list of 92 items which he referred to as “the thread of the Bible,” a list we were required to produce verbatim (along with the supporting scriptures) on the final test. Like all the other students, I grumbled incessantly, but became increasingly gratified that the task was indeed “doable” and that it proved practical if we continued to review and reinforce its contents. Memories do not fade if they are periodically reinforced with spaced repetition.

Not surprisingly, large segments of Scripture were cast into acrostics, tailor-made for memorization. Psalm 119, Proverbs 31, and the book of Lamentations, to name only a few, were cast into acrostics, in which each letter of the Hebrew alphabet begins either a verse or a stanza.

When Almighty God created both the physical and spiritual realms, He used both purposeful backup redundancy to protect and safeguard His creation. Every creature has been purposefully equipped with two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, two kidneys, two lungs, two arms, two legs, etc. The Word of God contains an Old Covenant and New Covenant, an Old Testament and a New Testament, leading philosopher Augustine of Hippo to proclaim, “The Old

Testament is the New Testament concealed. The New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.”

The multiple repetitions in both the Old and New Testament testifies to God’s use of repetition—purposeful redundancy—as a practical learning tool to inculcate His divine plan and His Word deep into our nervous systems. We find repetition—purposefully redundant—histories in the compilations of Samuel, the Kings, and the Chronicles, one set of accounts told from a historian’s point of view and the second from a priestly point of view.

The gospel of John and the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke represent another instance of repetition and purposeful redundancy, in which four different authors wrote for four different cultural viewpoints: Matthew to a Jewish audience, Mark to a Roman audience, Luke to a Greek audience, and John wrote for followers of Christ, focusing on the signs, discourses, and teachings of Jesus. Together, we arrive at a complete composite view, understanding that although each account may emphasize different details, the core message has been verified by four witnesses, twice the number needed to establish the credibility or reliability of an account.

I do not know of any human being outside of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who has memorized the entire Bible, but I do know of one theologian, Dr. Andrew Davis, a Baptist pastor in Durham, North Carolina, who has memorized 42 books of the Bible and has published an inexpensive Kindle E-book titled, [*An Approach to Extended Memorization of Scripture*](#), explaining how he began memorizing Scripture, providing detailed instructions on the daily process of memorizing entire books. I have found this work to be extremely helpful and instructive.

Dr. Davis does not have photographic memory, nor does he consider himself a super-brain, nor is his technique based on esoteric rocket science. He explains: It is simple: repetition over time. In other words, you keep repeating a book, one verse at a time, over and over until you have it. In his explanation of how to proceed, Dr. Davis provides this succinct explanation:

Let’s say you plan to memorize the book of Ephesians. On day one you read Ephesians 1:1 aloud ten times. Then you cover it and recite it ten times, adding the chapter number and verse number,

saying “1:1.” That’s it for day one. On day two you begin the principle of “yesterday’s verse first.” So you review verse one, saying it aloud ten times—looking at the verse as needed—and always saying the verse number. Then you go to verse two, reading it aloud ten times, then saying it from memory ten times, each time starting with “1:2.” You’re done for day two. By day four you’ve learned the process and have momentum. As before, you review yesterday’s verse first, then all previous verses, and then learn your new verse.

Repetition over time. He reiterates, “There’s no magic here. Just repetition over time. Once you’ve learned the entire book, you stop learning new verses and repeat the entire book daily for one hundred days. Then you start a new book.”

Dr. Davis says he never spends more than fifteen minutes a day working on Scripture memory. Even during his 100-day review of an entire book, he can recite most of them in fifteen minutes or less. For books that take more than fifteen minutes to say aloud, he sometimes recites only part of the book.

I chose to use the Lockman Foundation’s *New American Standard Bible* because it was more user friendly to speakers of the American English idiom. I personally do not feel that any English translation whether King James, A Faithful Version, NIV, or the Amplified Bible is closest to the original text in Hebrew or Greek. Back in 2010, I explained to a major Bible publisher that I believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, but not on the phonological, morphological, or syntactical level—that is the sounds, the words, or the word order, but only on the semantic level—the meaning. As Ron Kelly once said, “The Bible does not mean what it says; it means what it means.” That is why I agree with Martin Luther who argued that in Proverbs 26: 7 the expression “like lame legs hanging limp is a proverb in the mouth of a fool” would be rendered more acceptable to the German idiom with “Like a cripple who tries to dance is a proverb in the mouth of a fool.” *Wie einem Krüppel das Tanzen, also steht den Narren an, von Weisheit zu reden.* Different words to be sure, but equivalent meanings.

One of the reasons I like the Lockman Foundation’s *Amplified Bible* is that it uses a plethora of synonyms from the Saxon, Norman, and Latin layers of

the English language. For example, in Proverbs 11:14, “Where no one exercises guidance the people fall, but in abundance of counselors the people find victory.” Or “in a multitude of counselors there is safety.” Dave Maas’s corollary to this verse is, “When translating the Bible, in a multitude of synonyms there is safety.”

For this reason, I departed from the advice of both Andrew Davis and John Piper, who insisted that the memorization had to be “word perfect” either from the KJV or some other translation. When memorizing, I kept the essential wording of the NASB relatively intact, but with each go through on a verse, a slew of synonyms popped into my head, in the manner of the *Amplified Bible*. Synonyms are purposefully clustered together in our memory. Each go-through of a verse I would try to render it more smoothly and economical. This practice would sometimes lead to changing the passive voice to the active voice as Charles Whitaker frequently does on my abstracts. I imagine if a Charles Whitaker had edited the apostle Paul’s epistles, the apostle Peter would have not kvetched about their difficulty in II Peter 3:16.

Over the past 90 days, while hiking the canyons and rock formations of the Corriganville Movie Ranch every weekday morning, I have managed to memorize the epistle of James and have begun to memorize the epistle of Jude. The jackrabbits, coyotes, crows, and crickets probably know the book of James by heart. My goal (um Gottes Willen, James 4:15) is to also finish Jude before the Day of Atonement—not to earn any gold stars or have a memory sparring contest, but rather to prove to myself and to anyone who wants to fill his or her nervous system with the mind of Christ, that it is possible for anyone to accomplish this task. Imagine how much of God’s Word could be stashed away in a mere 15 to 20 minutes a day and thoroughly cultivated if one started this planting and cultivating of scripture in his 20s or 30s.

On the 30th of this month in Myrtle Beach (um Gottes willen again James 4:15) I will endeavor to provide a composite summary of the W’s and H’s of meditation, bringing this series to a conclusion.