

You've Examined Yourself—Now What?

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Forerunner, March-April 2026

As Passover approaches, we must heed the apostle Paul's serious warning found in I Corinthians 11:27-32:

Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

Self-examination is only the first step in worthily taking the Passover. Paul tells us to begin by examining ourselves, writing, "let a man examine himself," and "if we would judge ourselves." But seeing a problem is not the same as fixing it. If we recognize what is wrong and do nothing, we have not truly judged ourselves. Paul explains that if we judge ourselves, God will not have to judge us. But if we refuse to deal with our sins, He will correct us so that we are not condemned with the world (see "[Judge or Be Judged](#)").

Seeing sin is not the same as overcoming it. The challenge before us is this: Will we act on what we see?

What Comes Next

After we have honestly examined our hearts and seen what must change, what should come next? How do we move from knowing what is wrong to a change that is real, becomes part of daily life, and lasts? How do we prevent the sins we struggle with and resist or even avoid the temptations that lead to them?

Psalm 119:11 provides an answer: “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you” (*English Standard Version*). The psalmist protected himself from sin by storing God’s Word in his heart. It continues, teaching a clear principle: When God’s truth guides the heart, it shapes our choices.

So, we prevent sin by depositing God’s Word in our hearts, so our hearts and minds are prepared to avoid subsequent temptation to sin. If we want to grow in our ability to prevent sin, we must follow the same path. As we will see, our Example, Jesus Christ, showed us exactly how this principle works when He faced Satan’s temptations in Matthew 4.

But what does it mean to store His Word in our hearts and to live by what this verse teaches? God expects us to take His words seriously, with the conviction to live by every one of them (Matthew 4:4)—including the instruction in Psalm 119:11.

To understand this verse better, consider the word “heart.” In Hebrew, it refers to the inner person—the mind and will.

The Hebrew word translated as “stored” means to hide, treasure, or carefully preserve something valuable. As Psalm 119:72 declares, God’s law “is better . . . than thousands of coins of gold and silver.” God’s Word is not meant to sit unused in our thoughts. Instead, it is a treasure kept ready in our minds, so when we face temptation, we can “spend” it or, using another analogy, wield it as a weapon to defeat temptation.

We store God’s Word in our hearts by memorizing it. We must plant it in our minds before we face temptation, so we do not sin. But stored for what purpose? It is not for show, but for use.

James writes of this same idea when he urges us to receive “the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21). God’s Word, planted within us, is not meant to remain idle. It guards us from sin, changes us, and leads us to salvation.

Hearing God Speak to Us

Memorizing Scripture is not about collecting verses or proving what we can remember, but about equipping us to obey God when we face temptation. When we bring a verse to mind, we are not just repeating words. Through His Word, we are hearing the living God, our Father, speak to us.

Because God is always present, recalling His Word places us before Him. In that moment, we are face-to-face with Him. If we truly realize before whom we stand, His Word will bring real change. As Job says, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5-6).

Jesus Christ showed this same attitude when He faced temptation. When Satan tempted Him in Matthew 4, each time His reply began with, “It is written.” He did not rely on human opinion or speak on His own authority (John 12:49). He answered with the Word of God. Christ’s response shows that He understood and submitted to His Father’s authority. We should do no less!

When God’s Word is stored in our hearts, our minds are prepared to face temptation. When temptation arises, we have a verse from Scripture ready to answer it. In this way, the fiery darts of the wicked one are stopped before they lead us into sin (Ephesians 6:16).

Jesus’ Example

As a man, Jesus was tempted in every way we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). He did not defeat Satan by using divine power. Instead, He faced Satan as a man with human limitations and answered with the written Word of God. In doing so, He showed us how we should respond to temptation. That is why He is our Example to follow (I Peter 2:21).

So how do Christians wield the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17) when they face temptation? Notice what Christ’s example in Matthew 4 shows:

- » The verses were already stored in His mind.
- » Each verse He used matched the specific temptation.

- » He did not need to stop and search for them; they were top of mind, ready for use.
- » He treated God's Word as the final authority over Satan's words.

In this passage, we see Christ putting Psalm 119:11 into action. He used the Word already stored in His memory to answer temptation immediately, remaining faithful and without sin. He treated His Father's Word as the highest authority and answered Satan by replacing Satan's deceitful words with God's pure Word. By doing this, Jesus showed us exactly how to respond when tempted: Replace the wrong thought with God's Word. If the sinless Son of God, living as a man, relied on His Father's Word to defeat temptation, how can we expect to defeat it any other way? (For a deeper study of how Christ defeated temptation, see my previous article, "[Conquering Temptation: Learn from Jesus Christ](#)".)

Christ's response to temptation also shows us how to choose God's will. Every temptation forces a choice. Adam and Eve chose their own desire instead of following God's command. Israel often trusted their fears instead of His promises. We face the same decision. In each moment, we either follow God's will or our own. What we do under pressure reveals the true intent and quality of our hearts. Are we following Jesus' way of responding to temptation, or are we simply drifting along (Hebrews 2:1)?

God requires us to choose, urging us to choose life:

I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Choosing life requires effort. Memorizing verses is work. Paul exhorts us to "work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). Part of that work is training our thoughts and actions to follow what God says. Human nature looks for excuses to avoid doing what God requires. True obedience depends on trusting God to help us, even when His way is hard, uncomfortable, or different from what we would choose.

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Good people might fall again and again, but they *always* get up. It is the wicked who are defeated by their troubles. (Proverbs 24:16, *Easy-to-Read Version* [ERV]; emphasis ours throughout)

Why Memorizing Scripture Works

Now that we see *what* to do, let us examine *why* it works.

It becomes clearer when applied to a specific weakness. A personal example is I Peter 2:13: “Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake.” I use this verse to keep myself from speeding.

Here, God’s Word demonstrates its power. When I bring that verse front and center in my mind and think about it seriously, I realize I stand before the God of the universe. His Word makes clear what He requires. Hebrews 10:31 adds extra emphasis: “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” At that moment, I either obey or disobey—there is no middle ground.

My choice reveals my heart’s intent. Am I submitting to God or choosing my own will? The verse commands obedience to *every* ordinance of man. I do not get to choose which ones to follow. “Every” means all ordinances unless a human ordinance forces me to disobey God (Acts 5:29). Over time, such choices expose whether I truly want to change or still cling to my old ways.

Once I quote the verse and remember who is speaking, my excuses melt under the power of His presence:

- » “I’m in a hurry.”
- » “A few miles over isn’t a big deal.”
- » “Everyone does it.”
- » “No one will know.”

This last excuse is the greatest lie we tell ourselves. God always knows. Hebrews 4:13 reminds us: “And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.” When we bring His Word clearly to mind, we cannot pretend ignorance. We either obey or knowingly rebel.

This idea applies far beyond this simple example. Consider Proverbs 3:5-6: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.”

Consider these familiar verses in simpler terms: “Trust the Lord completely, and *don't depend on your own knowledge*. With every step you take, *think about what he wants*, and *he will help you go the right way*” (ERV).

» “Don't depend on your own knowledge”: When God's Word comes to mind, our reasoning is no longer the standard. God's understanding is. We must decide whose understanding we will follow—ours or God's.

» “Think about what He wants”: God's Word does not leave us guessing. In that moment, we know *exactly* what obedience requires.

» “He will help you go the right way”: When His Word is stored in our minds, we are not left to guess the right direction to go. His Word helps us walk in the right way.

The Danger of an Unused Sword

Even if we memorize a verse, we may still avoid using it. The phrase “whistling past the graveyard” describes trying to distract oneself from something frightening. The graveyard is still there; the person simply refuses to think about it. We can do the same with our sins. We know the truth, but we push it out of our minds and think about something else so we do not have to face it.

The same thing can happen with God's Word. Having the verse stored is not enough. We must recall it and use it as our weapon against temptation. Yet human nature would rather leave that verse in the background and ignore it. When we do that, we open the door to excuses and disobedience.

People even joke, "The Devil made me do it." It may sound harmless, but it hides the truth. It is easier to shift the blame than to take responsibility for our choices. God promises that no temptation is too strong for us to overcome when we rely on Him (I Corinthians 10:13). Sometimes a verse comes to mind, and we know what it says. We also know that if we think about it seriously, we will have to obey it. Instead, we push it aside because we would rather not make the hard choice.

In that moment, we cannot say we did not know what was right, nor can we say we were too weak. The truth is that we knew what God required and chose not to submit to Him. By doing so, we pushed God out of our thoughts and rejected His rule (Psalm 10:4). James 4:17 calls it sin. Frankly, it is rebellion against God.

At times, this rebellion is driven by cowardice. We shrink from facing the truth, afraid of what obedience will cost us. When we understand what God commands and still refuse to do it, that is rebellion. I Samuel 15:23 warns, "rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft." Revelation 21:8 warns that both sorcery and cowardice threaten eternal life. God does not treat such choices lightly.

Developing the Mind of Christ

For this reason, Scripture commands us to bring "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (II Corinthians 10:5) and "be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Ephesians 4:23). An important way this renewal takes place is when we memorize and fill our minds with God's Word. When it is stored in our minds and ready for recall, it helps us measure our thoughts against His truth. Instead of letting our own reasoning rule us, we can measure every thought by what God reveals.

The Bible also commands us to have the mind of Christ:

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» Philippians 2:5: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”

» I Peter 4:1: “Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind.”

The Bible reveals how He thinks, so when we read and study it, we learn to think as Christ does. Paul admonishes us in Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you *richly*.”

When Christ’s Word fills our hearts and minds, God uses it to guide our thinking and our choices. Psalm 37:31 reveals the result: “The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.” As we obey what He says, His Spirit provides the strength to change: “I will put My Spirit within you and *cause* you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them” (Ezekiel 36:27).

But how does His Word come to dwell in us? Deuteronomy 6:6 answers plainly: “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.” Notice this verse in modern English: “Memorize his laws” (*Contemporary English Version*). For strategies and practical tips on memorization, see “[Unsheathe Your Sword! \(Part Two\)](#).”

If we are serious about overcoming sin, we must work with a clear purpose. Jesus’ example shows us a simple process to follow:

1. Identify a fault and the thought or temptation that leads to it.
2. Find a verse that directly counters the temptation and use it just as Christ used God’s Word to answer Satan.
3. Memorize the verse so it is ready when needed.
4. Repeat the verse immediately when the wrong thought arises. Make this practice a habit.

5. Turn to God at once while resisting the temptation. Ask Him for strength and faith to overcome and continue the process until it becomes a natural response, just as it was for Christ.

When we practice this repeatedly, we learn to think according to God's Word. Then, when temptation comes, we are not scrambling for an answer. We recall the verse, understand what it requires, and act on it at once.

Not Just for Passover

The method is clear: Confront the weakness, arm yourself with the specific verse, and use it when temptation arises. Following Christ's example, with God's help, this is how we fight and quench Satan's fiery darts.

But this process is not only for Passover preparation. Satan does not take a day off but looks for every chance to weaken our trust in God so he can devour and destroy us (I Peter 5:8). Are we prepared to defend against his daily temptations?

He knows the weak places in our armor. If we are not strengthening those weak points with God's Word, we should not be surprised when he aims his attacks at them. If we are not using God's Word each day to fight temptation, is it because Satan took the day off or because we did?

Jesus Christ defeated Satan by answering with His Father's Word, and we must do the same when we face temptation. He answered as a man who trusted and obeyed His Father. He had trained His mind to think as His Father thinks, and He obeyed fully. If we want to obey Christ, we must likewise learn to think as He does, which the Bible clearly discloses. When we store His Word in our minds and use it when we face temptation, we choose His way instead of our own.

Seeing our sins is not enough. We must use God's Word to correct our thinking and change how we act. When we store His Word in our minds and use it when we face temptation, we prepare not only for Passover but for every day that follows.

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Christ sacrificed Himself for us, and now He calls us to sacrifice ourselves for Him. We do this by choosing His way of thinking instead of our own.

That is how we put our human nature to death. Will we do it?