



An Approach to Extended Memorization of Scripture

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SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION COMMANDED

Welcome to the rich and challenging journey of extended memorization of Scripture! You are about to embark on one of the most searching and rewarding exercises of spiritual and mental labor anyone could ever attempt: the memorizing of whole chapters and books of the Bible. This effort will challenge you to the depths of your being. Not simply because memorizing is hard work (it is), but because the verses themselves will search your souls with the light of God's perfect Word. Some days memorizing are harder than others, and it gets harder as you get older and busier. But the rewards of knowledge of God's Word and of growing intimacy with Christ will make all your labor in the face of these challenges worthwhile.

As you face the challenges of extended memorization, it is good to know whether God is commanding you to do this. Scripture is very clear that God does not want us to innovate when it comes to pleasing Him: He wants simple obedience. "To obey is better than sacrifice." (1 Samuel 15:22) Jesus said "If you love me, you will obey what I command." (John 14:15) Now the incredible beauty of the Christian life is that we learn that the Lord will enable us to keep all His commands by the power of the Holy Spirit. Ezekiel 36:27 promises that God will put His Spirit in us and move us to follow His commands and be careful to keep His laws. If this is so, the amazing power of the New Covenant in Christ is that God's commands become promises of what He will do in our lives by His Spirit.

So, has God commanded us to memorize Scripture? Yes, I believe He has in many places, and that Scripture encourages memorization in other places. Let's look at some key passages.

In John 15, Jesus likens Himself to a vine and believers as branches that must abide (or live, dwell, remain) in Him in order to stay alive and be fruitful. In John 15:7-8, Jesus gets even more specific, saying that if we remain in Him and His words (plural!) remain/live/dwell/abide in us, then we may ask whatever we wish and it will be given to us.

John 15:7-8 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

This is the essence of the fruitfulness by which we will both glorify God and prove that we are Jesus' disciples. But what does it mean to have Jesus' "words" (plural!) remaining/living/dwelling/abiding in us? It means at least that we can remember them. More than that, it means that they are captivating our minds and hearts, multiplying and spreading like yeast within us, dominating our heart more and more. It is hard for me to see how this can be done as fully as Jesus intends apart from memorization.

Similar to this passage is Paul's commandment to the Colossians:

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

How can we obey this commandment fully apart from memorization? By saturating our minds with the Word of God, and by continually keeping it in front of us, we may obey Paul's words here.

Along with these verses come some from the Old Testament which speak of God's people meditating on God's Word "day and night." Before the invention of the moveable type printing press by Gutenberg in 1439, Bibles were copied by hand and extremely expensive. Only a small percentage of God's people would have had their own copies of God's Word. So to meditate "day and night" on a passage meant to have memorized it:

Psalms 1:1-3 Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. 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, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

Joshua 1:8 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Psalm 119:97 Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.

Psalm 119:148 My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promises.

It is the same for us today, even in our blessed age in which the Word of God is so readily accessible to so many of God's people. Meditating on Scripture continually ("day and night" or "all day long") is very difficult without memorization.

Some passages in Proverbs speak of storing up God's commands within us:

Proverbs 2:1-6 My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

Proverbs 7:1-3 My son, keep my words and store up my commands within you. Keep my commands and you will live; guard my teachings as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart.

If you read these two passages carefully, they seem to lead directly to the discipline of memorization. What does it mean to "store up God's commands within you" apart from memorizing them? The second passage speaks of writing the teachings of God on the "tablet of your heart." That seems like memorization to me!

Perhaps one of the best known verses on memorization comes from Psalm 119, that marvelous and complex poem of praise for the perfection of God's Holy Word. In verse 9, we have a clear recommendation of memorization, coupled with a powerful motive—personal holiness:

Psalm 119:11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

So also Deuteronomy 6 commands Jewish fathers to have God's word "upon their hearts" and to "sharpen them" (the literal Hebrew word translated, "impress"):

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress (lit. "sharpen") them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

If you read these vital words carefully, the strong sense of memorization will come clearly to the fore. What does it mean to have these commandments (plural!) "upon our hearts"? I am not saying that memorization is sufficient to fulfill this, but it may well be necessary—or at least helpful! And how can you talk about the commands of God so continually with your children while walking along the road if you can't recite their content? The word "impress" ("sharpen") implies a continually repeated hearing of God's commands... it's going on all the time. Again, that points to memorization.

Finally, consider the words of James 1:

James 1:22-25 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it-- he will be blessed in what he does.

What could be clearer than this? If we do not forget the Word of God after we've read it but rather continually gazing into its truth, what does it mean but to remember it? And another word for continually remembering the Word is memorizing it.

THE BENEFITS OF SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION

There are numerous spiritual benefits to the memorization of Scripture. A proper assessment of these benefits begins with understanding the role of the written word of God in our spiritual development. Jesus Christ openly stated that our spiritual existence depends upon the word of God: “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:4) The words of God are written in only one place: the Bible. Also, according to the Apostle Peter one of our ongoing responsibilities is to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ,” (2 Peter 3:18) and that we are to “make every effort to add to our faith goodness, and to goodness knowledge...” (2 Peter 1:5). But how are we to grow? Growth in the Lord is called “sanctification,” the process by which we become more and more like Jesus Christ and more and more separated from the world. Jesus Christ says that happens by the Word of God: “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.” (John 17:17) However, the Word of God must enter us through our MIND—through our understanding—in order to change our hearts. Thus we are to meditate deeply on Scripture in order to understand it better, so that our hearts may be changed. And we are to meditate on “**every** word that comes from the mouth of God.” There is no more useful discipline to this careful process of verse by verse meditation than memorization. Memorization is not the same as meditation, but it is almost impossible for someone to memorize a passage of Scripture without somewhat deepening his/her understanding of those verses. Plus, once the passage is memorized, a lifetime of reflection is now available through ongoing review... while driving on long trips, while walking on beaches, while conversing with friends, memorized verses can flow from you and cause a deepening of understanding.

Furthermore, these verses also sanctify us by causing us to hate sin and to determine to fight it vigorously. Through memorization, we are able to stand in the moment of temptation through the “sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.” (Ephesians 6:17) Therefore the Psalmist says, “How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.” (Psalm 119:9,11)

In addition, the word sanctifies us by transforming our entire worldview from secular to heavenly: “Do not be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will.” (Romans 12:2) The “renewing of your minds” happens by the flow of

Scripture through them like a pure river. As this river flows through your mind constantly, you will see things more and more the way God does, if you are a child of God... for “we have the mind of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 2:16) This gives us more and more wisdom to deal with this world.

However, this benefit does not merely bless US in our own growth and development, but it becomes a treasure trove for the growth of the church as well. The Scripture memorizer will be used mightily by God to teach and encourage other Christians, with an apt word from the perfect Word of God: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom...” (Colossians 3:16) How better can you obey Colossians 3:16 than by Scripture memorization? The “word of Christ” will indeed “dwell in you richly” as you memorize it, and then work it over in your mind through meditation. Then you will most certainly be useful to God to “teach and admonish” another brother or sister. Scripture builds the Church to its final doctrinal and practical maturity (Ephesians 4:13-16), and God uses those who memorize it to do this building in a powerful and eternally fruitful way.

Finally, the memorization of Scripture enables us to bless lost people with a powerful and vivid presentation of the gospel of salvation. “Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.” (Romans 10:17) Those who memorize Scripture obey Peter’s command in this regard: “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have.” (1 Peter 3:15) The “preparation” Peter had in mind is powerfully done by memorizing Scripture. Remember that it is Scripture which is “able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 3:15) The evangelist who stores up Scripture on the life of Christ, for example, can vividly retell the miracle stories to a generation which is biblically illiterate, which knows very little about the life of Christ. That person can also give the theology of salvation from Paul’s epistles, if they have memorized those books. In short, Scripture memorization makes one a much more powerful and effective evangelist.

There are other benefits: comfort during trials and bereavement, power and wisdom for counseling, the development of heavenly-mindedness, the manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit, conviction over indwelling sin, fruitful passage of time while waiting for delayed plane flights, etc. Suffice it to say that this is well worth our time.

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 heart. We will only wish we’d spent more time doing this.

OVERCOMING EXCUSES FOR NOT MEMORIZING

The human heart is deceitful and twisted in so many ways (Jeremiah 17:9). We can make amazing excuses against doing things that the Lord has commanded, and that would be richly beneficial to us. I want to expose and refute very briefly a number of the more common excuses:

1) **“I don’t have a good memory”**

Actually, you have a much better memory than you think. Consider how many song lyrics you have memorized, many of which you don’t even like! Consider how many facts of history or literature are burned in your mind. Consider how many phone numbers and addresses and significant dates are written permanently on your heart. You have a sufficiently good memory to begin memorizing Scripture. And the more you do, the better your memory will become.

2) **“It will take too much time”**

This is really an exposure of your priority structures. We make time for whatever is truly important to us. I don’t deny that memorizing books of the Bible is very time consuming, but it is also very rewarding.

3) **“I’m too busy”**

This is another version of the previous excuse. It all comes down to your priorities, to the value you place on the Word of God and on your spiritual health. Admittedly, there are some seasons of life that are busier than others, and in those times, your memorization may be greatly reduced. But a settled pattern of your life should be to work daily on memorizing Scripture.

4) **“I’m not very interested”**

Ouch! This is one of the worst excuses of all. At least the individual is honest... but honest about what—that he/she has very little interest in the Word of God?! Such an attitude might very well be exposing an unregenerate heart. A genuine Christian loves the Word of God and hungers and thirsts for it. This terrible excuse comes from a heart riddled with idols and worldliness and is in great spiritual danger.

5) **“I’ve tried before and it never really worked”**

Scripture memorization doesn’t “work”... WE work. I know that memorization is hard work, but God can give us the strength to do it by His Spirit. Scripture memorization is a discipline, and it will develop stronger and stronger as we do it more and more. We will get “in shape” as we do it.

6) “I don’t see the benefit of working on it that hard”

The Word of God is lavish in its promises of blessing to all who will trust it and follow it. Psalm 1:1-3 (quoted above) promises that, if we meditate on God’s Word day and night, we will be blessed in whatever we do! What could be better than that? The New Testament links that blessing directly to the person and work of Jesus Christ. By the Scripture, we come to faith in Christ, and by the Scripture we flourish in that faith. Nothing can make you richer (spiritually, I mean) than the Word of God!

7) “I read the Bible every day... why do I need to memorize it?”

Obviously it is not true that we get nothing out of merely reading the Word of God. That is obviously untrue. Even if we work very hard at memorization, we will memorize only a small percentage of the overall Bible. We will get value out of whatever we read from God's Word. But I believe the value is proportional to our understanding and internalization of the Word. The more deeply we meditate and absorb those truths, the more completely we will be blessed.

8) “I don’t know what translation to use”

The choice of a proper translation is a weighty one, since we will be more or less “stuck” with whatever one we invest ourselves in over years and years. There are no perfect translations, but in English, there are many excellent ones. We are rich among all the languages on the Earth to have so many options. I would recommend you research the strengths and weaknesses of all the major translations, and make a wise choice. Then go ahead and memorize and don’t look back. Unless, of course, the publisher of that translation decides to change it for suspect theological reasons and pull all the old copies off the shelves and out of the cyber-world. Then you have to choose another one.

9) “I might become prideful”

The shocking news proclaimed by the Bible is that you’re already prideful! Pride is deeply woven into the fabric of our sin nature. The Word of God is the remedy, not the cause of pride. If you think you will struggle with pride, then memorize some verses on pride and/or humility. But refraining from memorizing because you might get prideful is foolish. Rather ask God to keep you humble as you learn the richness of His Word.

10) “I don’t know how to do it”

That is what this booklet is for. I pray it will help you!

MEMORIZING BOOKS IS BETTER THAN MEMORIZING INDIVIDUAL VERSES

Jesus said, “Man does not live on bread alone, but on **every** word that comes from the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:4) Paul said “**All** Scripture is God-breathed, and is useful for teaching rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness...” (2 Timothy 3:16) Paul told the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:27, “I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God.” Memorizing individual verses tends to miss intervening verses that the individual does not feel are as significant. If we continue to focus only on our “favorite” passages of Scripture, we may well miss something new that God wants to say to the church through a neglected portion of His Word. God does not speak any word in vain, and there are no wasted passages of Scripture.

This approach also aids in the proper teaching of the Word. The best mode of teaching and preaching is expository—setting forth in good order what God says. Preaching topically, while necessary from time to time, is not the best standard mode of ministry, for the pastor/teacher will tend to say no more than what he already has understood from those “favorite” verses. But a teacher who goes through the entire passage will undoubtedly open up a new world to his hearers, exciting them with observations they are not likely to have seen before. Thus, memorizing books leads to a constant discovery of new insights, which keeps love for the Word vibrant and thrilling.

Also, since much of Scripture is written to make a rational case, there is a flow of argumentation that is missed if individual verses are memorized. But memorizing entire books verse by verse enables the person to go easily from the “trees to the forest” and back again. This person will be able to tell you the overall flow of the book of Galatians, for example, as well as how each paragraph fits into this flow, and how each verse contributes to each paragraph. Thus, there is far less likelihood of taking verses out of context when entire books are memorized. But those who memorize individual verses are particularly prone to taking verses out of context.

MAKING THE COMMITMENT BEFORE GOD

Go to the Lord in prayer and ask Him if He wants you to invest time in Scripture memorization. Listen to Him, confident that He will guide you. Once you have that sense from God, ask Him humbly for help from the Holy Spirit. Ask Him to protect you from spiritual pride... God hates pride in every form (see Isaiah 2:6-22 and Luke 18:9-14), and while knowledge of the Bible is absolutely essential to spiritual maturity, yet Biblical knowledge without love for God and neighbor “puffs up” a person (1 Cor. 8:2) and is useless to God and actually harmful to the church. God is well able to take away your ability to memorize if you use it for your own glory. Then, humbly make the commitment before God that you will invest time in Scripture memorization. Later, after you choose your book to memorize, you will have the opportunity to make a written covenant before God concerning your commitment.

CHOOSING YOUR FIRST BOOK

Once you have sensed God’s leadership and have made the commitment before God that you will memorize a whole book of the Bible, the next step is to choose the book. This, too, should be done with prayer and a sense of the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Some practical concerns should guide your choice as well:

1) **Not too long (or too short?):** Your first book should not be too long, lest you get discouraged in the way and give up. The greatest obstacle to lasting achievement in this arena is lack of perseverance... just giving up. We give up usually because the way seems too long and we feel we lack the strength for the rest of the journey. Just as one who someday wants to finish a marathon does not begin simply by running 26.2 miles but must rather work up to that level, so it is also with extended Scripture memorization. You must get the discipline deeply rooted in your daily habits and you must develop your memory skills before you can attempt a really long book. Start with one around 90-160 verses long. There are shorter books of the Bible, but 2 John or 3 John may not have the same impact on your life as one of the longer epistles. However, all Scripture is God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16), and therefore God may call you to start with 2 John.

2) **One that stirs your passions:** Choose a book that God has used in the past to minister to you, and that you think would be most useful in your personal walk with Christ and in your ministry to others. You should also choose a book that still has some mysteries to you (as all Scripture should and does), and that you see as an adventure in learning.

After you have assessed your options, bring various options before the Lord in prayer and listen to His voice. Ask Him to guide you, and He will direct your choice.

SURVEYING THE TERRAIN

The next step is to survey the entire book for length, and decide how quickly you feel you can memorize it. Perhaps you can start at one verse per day, six days per week. I always recommend taking one day off per week so you don't get burned out, or to take up the slack for days in which you are sick or exceptionally busy.

The way you survey the terrain is this:

- 1) Count the number of verses in the entire book.
- 2) Divide that number by the number of verses you will memorize per week. This is how many weeks the book should take you.
- 3) Look at a calendar and determine a tentative finish date.
- 4) If needed, add 10% so as to not feel under tremendous pressure until you get used to this lifestyle (i.e. if you are doing Ephesians—155 verses—at the rate of 6 verses per week, it will take you 26 weeks, or exactly 6 months; add 10% —3 weeks—for a total of 29 weeks).
- 5) Make a covenant before the Lord that, with his help, you will memorize this book by this date:

“Lord, having sought you in prayer, I believe that you have led me to memorize (name of the book) . I now dedicate myself to begin this task with your help and for your glory. I commit myself to memorizing this by (date) .”

Sign and date the covenant, and put it in a place where you can get to it regularly when the times get tough. The purpose of surveying the terrain is to mark out a reasonable pace which will make achievement of your goal a probability. It will teach you how much you need to do every day, and when you should finish. The survey leads to a covenant that helps you keep persevering.

DAILY PROCEDURES

Priority of reviewing old verses: Always give priority in your mind to the retaining of old verses even over the learning of new ones. What's the point in going on to new ones if you don't hold onto the old? This doesn't mean you should re-memorize the old ones... just that you should begin every day's work with review of old verses. Look on that as what you need to do to earn the privilege of acquiring some precious new verses. (Work before play!)

Repetition over time: Saying a verse one hundred times in one day is not as helpful as saying it every day for one hundred days. The absolute key to successful Scripture memorization is repetition over a long time period. This is how you retain old verses while learning new ones.

Memorizing the verse numbers: An important note is that it is well worth the extra effort to memorize the verse numbers as if they were part of each verse. This will help prevent you from dropping out verses or even whole paragraphs when you're reciting the book all the way through. It will also help you in being able to pick individual verses out to quote to someone for ministry or evangelistic purposes. Finally, it will help you to be able to recall the verses as you are reading Christian books that cite them... you won't have to look them up. Ephesians 1:1-3's verse numbers would be said like this: "**One-one**. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus; **One-two** Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **One-three** Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ..." etc. Longer verse numbers are no different... Ephesians 6:11 would be "**Six-eleven**. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes." Acts 27:25-26 would be "**Twenty-seven twenty-five**. So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. **Twenty-seven twenty-six**., Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island." Don't short-cut this discipline. It actually makes memorization easier in the long run.

Photographing the verses with your eyes: Memorization is partly visual. This is not to say that blind people can't memorize the Bible, but just that the memorization process is connected very closely to the eye. Read each new

verse ten times, covering each words as though photographing it with your eyes. I can still remember where some particular verses were on the page of the Bible I first used to memorize them. Burn each verse into your brain with your eyes.

Say it out loud: Another help in memorizing is to say the verse out loud to yourself. The additional sensory input to your brain helps the memorization process. It doesn't have to be very loud, just loud enough so you can hear it. Also, try putting some feeling and interpretation into reciting the verses... this is actually a form of meditation on the verses as you are learning them.

Sample daily procedure: The following is an example of how someone could go about memorizing Ephesians at the rate of one verse per day:

1) Day one: Read Ephesians 1:1 out loud ten times, looking at each word as if photographing it with your eyes. **Be sure to include the verse number.** Then cover the page and recite it ten times. You're done for the day.

2) Day two: **Yesterday's verse first.** Recite yesterday's verse, Ephesians 1:1 ten times, being sure to include the verse number. Look in the Bible if you need to, just to refresh your memory. Now, do your **new verse.** Read Ephesians 1:2 out loud ten times, looking at each word as if photographing it with your eyes. **Be sure to include the verse number.** Then cover the page and recite it ten times. You're done for the day.

3) Day three: **Yesterday's verse first.** Recite yesterday's verse, Ephesians 1:2 ten times, being sure to include the verse number. Again, you should look in the Bible if you need to, just to refresh your memory. **Old verses next, altogether:** Recite Ephesians 1:1-2 together once, being sure to include the verse numbers. Now, do your **new verse.** Read Ephesians 1:3 out loud ten times, looking at each word as if photographing it with your eyes. **Be sure to include the verse number.** Then cover the page and recite it ten times. You're done for the day.

4) Day four: **Yesterday's verse first.** Recite yesterday's verse, Ephesians 1:3 ten times, being sure to include the verse number. Again, you should look in the Bible if you need to, just to refresh your memory. **Old verses next, altogether:** Recite Ephesians 1:1-3 together once, being sure to include the verse numbers. Now, do your **new**

verse. Read Ephesians 1:4 out loud ten times, looking at each word as if photographing it with your eyes. **Be sure to include the verse number.** Then cover the page and recite it ten times. You're done for the day.

This cycle would continue through the entire book. Obviously, the **“old verses altogether”** stage will soon swell to take the most time of all. That's exactly the way it should be. The entire book of Ephesians can be read at a reasonable rate in less than fifteen minutes. Therefore, the **“old verses altogether”** stage of your review should not take longer than that on any given day. Do it with the Bible ready at hand, in case you draw a blank or get stuck... there's no shame in looking, and it actually helps to nail down troublesome verses so they will never be trouble again. Therefore, your 60th day should look like this:

60) Day sixty: (eight days off in that span means you're on your 52nd new verse, which would be Ephesians 3:7) **Yesterday's verse first.** Recite yesterday's verse, Ephesians 3:6 ten times, being sure to include the verse number. Again, you should look in the Bible if you need to, just to refresh your memory. **Old verses next, altogether:** Recite Ephesians 1:1-3:6 together once, being sure to include the verse numbers. Look in the Bible if you need to, so this process won't take too long. Now, do your **new verse.** Read Ephesians 3:7 out loud ten times, looking at each word as if photographing it with your eyes. **Be sure to include the verse number.** Then cover the page and recite it ten times. You're done for the day.

WEEDING THE GARDEN

As you recite a book over a long period of time without looking at the Bible, you will gradually begin to make little mistakes or leave verses out (again, this is why memorizing verse numbers is so helpful). In other words, “weeds” will start to grow in the garden of your mind. However, to “weed the garden,” once a week, read through the book, looking at each verse carefully with your eyes. This will be in lieu of your “old verses next, altogether” daily task. This simple discipline will correct errors—this will “weed the garden.”

LONG-TERM RETENTION AND/OR MOVING ON TO OTHER BOOKS

Assuming you continue this procedure in Ephesians with no missed days (other than your one day off per week), you should be done with the whole book in 26 weeks. When you have learned Ephesians 6:24, **“Six twenty-four.** Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.” You should stop to celebrate...get on your knees and give thanks to God for His goodness to you!

But after your celebration is done, you need to get back to work. If you have done the **“old verses altogether”** stage faithfully, this next stage should not be overly burdensome, even though it may seem like it will: **recite the entire book from memory for one hundred consecutive days.** If you have done your work well, after about the second week you probably won't even need the Bible anywhere near you while you do this. Thus, you can do this step while in the shower, while driving, while washing dishes, while walking down the road, while exercising... it will add no extra time to your busy schedule. What is more, it is in this stage that you begin to see the scope of the entire book of Ephesians (or whatever book you have memorized). You will see large themes that unite chapters together, you will see the flow of the argument, you will discover new things that you never knew before.

Be tough with yourself... one hundred days without missing a single one! You can do it, and you'll be glad you did.

When that is over, you have two options: either you can seek to retain Ephesians indefinitely as you add other books, or you can “kiss the book goodbye” and devote your attention to acquiring new books. While there are advantages to trying to retain old books indefinitely, at some point most people will reach a saturation level and no longer be able to learn new books while holding on to all the books they've learned in the past. It's a rare person who can hold onto limitless old verses while continually adding new ones. Everyone will come to an end of what they can hold on the “desktop” of their minds—verses readily accessible, ready for quotation. Now, just because you “kiss the book goodbye” doesn't mean you will forget it entirely. The meaning of Ephesians will stick with you, and so will your specific knowledge of all its teachings. You will immediately remember what you know so well as soon as you look at the page, and you will never forget the flow of thought, or even specific insights you've learned. You will forever be able to read the paragraphs with deep insight and sensitivity, and you will know what you're looking for when you flip there to confirm a cross-reference. The Holy Spirit will be able to bring back to mind whatever verses He wants to use to convict you of sin or strengthen your heart or for witnessing. It's all still there—it's just subterranean now! If you should

ever choose to return and get it uploaded again, it will be far easier than if you'd never memorized it before.

The reason you would “kiss the book goodbye” is to free you up to learn new books without requiring a major change in your lifestyle—entering a Scripture Memorization monastery or cult in which all you do with your life is memorize! If you find that your intake of new books is hampered by seeking to retain old books, then... “Kiss the book goodbye!” Why? For the sake of all the new insights you will gain by learning a new book of the Bible. Not many people will complete memorizing the whole Bible. There will always be more memorization work you can do. So keep learning new books. If on the other hand you do not go on to memorize a new book, then don't “kiss the book goodbye.” I'd rather have you doing some memorization than no memorization.

Now if you are one of those rare people who can possibly retain seemingly limitless old books such that you are in no way hindered in memorizing new books by retaining old books, then try this approach: stick the book in a slot (Monday morning, let's say), and recite on Monday morning for the rest of your life. You will never forget it. However, don't forget to “weed the garden”.

MEMORIZING LONG BOOKS & MEMORIZING FASTER

After you've taken six months with Ephesians at the rate of one verse per day, you may feel that you're ready to memorize a longer book. If, for example, you memorized Romans, you would be looking at 432 verses. At the rate of one verse per day, that's close to a year and a half (with a 10% fudge factor in there). That may be too long for you... you're ready to pick up the pace. When I memorized the Gospel of Matthew, I did it at the rate of 36 verses per week... six per day, six days per week. It took me about 9 months, since I didn't maintain that pace the whole time... but Matthew is 1068 verses long... a verse a day would have been much too slow. Let's look at how to do multiple verses in a single day:

- 1) Day one: Read Matthew 1:1 out loud ten times, looking at each word as if photographing it with your eyes. **Be sure to include the verse number.** Then cover the page and recite it ten times. Repeat for verses 2 through 6, being sure to include the verse numbers. Then, recite the whole six verse section, Matthew 1:1-6, ten times. You're done for the day.

2) Day two: **Yesterday's verses first.** Recite yesterday's verses, Matthew 1:1-6, ten times, being sure to include the verse numbers. Look in the Bible if you need to, just to refresh your memory. Now, do your **new verses**. Read Matthew 1:7 out loud ten times, looking at each word as if photographing it with your eyes. **Be sure to include the verse number.** Then cover the page and recite it ten times. Repeat for Matthew 1:8-12. Then, recite the whole new six verse section, Matthew 1:7-12, ten times. You're done for the day.

3) Day three: **Yesterday's verses first.** Recite yesterday's verses, Matthew 1:7-12, ten times, being sure to include the verse number. Again, you should look in the Bible if you need to, just to refresh your memory. **Old verses next, altogether:** Recite Matthew 1:1-12 together once, being sure to include the verse numbers. Now, do your **new verses**. Read Matthew 1:13 out loud ten times, looking at each word as if photographing it with your eyes. **Be sure to include the verse number.** Then cover the page and recite it ten times. Repeat for Matthew 1:14-18. Then, recite the whole new six verse section, Matthew 1:13-18, ten times. You're done for the day.

4) Day four: **Yesterday's verses first.** Recite yesterday's verses, Matthew 1:13-18, ten times, being sure to include the verse number. Again, you should look in the Bible if you need to, just to refresh your memory. **Old verses next, altogether:** Recite Matthew 1:1-18 together once, being sure to include the verse numbers. Now, do your **new verses**. Read Matthew 1:19 out loud ten times, looking at each word as if photographing it with your eyes. **Be sure to include the verse number.** Then cover the page and recite it ten times. Repeat for Matthew 1:20-24. Then, recite the whole new six verse section, Matthew 1:19-24, ten times. You're done for the day.

The ongoing review (the "**old verses altogether**" stage) will get unwieldy once you're at chapter 7 or 8. At that point, start leaving off chapter 1, then chapter 2, then chapter 3 etc. as you continue to move through the book. Limit the amount of time you spend on the "**old verses altogether**" stage to fifteen or twenty minutes. Review the chapters you leave off (chapter 1, then 2, then 3) once per week. By the time you get to Matthew 28:20, you will have to divide your long-term review into reasonable portions. This is the "High School Method" of long-term review:

The High School Method of Long-Term Review (using The Gospel of Matthew as an example):

1) Read Matthew with a stop watch, and time out ten minutes of verses, reading at a normal rate. This may be Matthew 1-5, depending on your

normal reading rate. Let's take that as an example. (I average about 125 verses for 10 minutes). NOTE: Stop at major chapter divisions... don't do Matthew 1:1 thru 5:37 for example. Dig deep and get to the end of the nearest chapter, even if it's 11 minutes of reading for you.

2) Recite Matthew 1-5 every day for 25 days. After about 15 days, you should be able to do it without the Bible, if you did your work well the first time you memorized these verses. Then just do it in the shower or while driving, etc. This shouldn't add anything extra to your day.

3) On the 26th day, add the next "ten minutes" of Matthew. Let's say this is Matthew 6-8. Recite Matthew 6-8 every day for 25 days, while continuing Matthew 1-5 for this time. At the end of this period, you will have done Matthew 1-5 for 50 straight days, and Matthew 6-8 for 25 straight days.

4) On the 51st day, add the next "ten minutes" (i.e. 125 verses or so) of Matthew. Let's say this is Matthew 9-12. Do these chapters for 25 days, while continuing Matthew 1-5 and 6-8. At the end of this period, you will have done Matthew 1-5 for 75 days, Matthew 6-8 for 50 days, and Matthew 9-12 for 25 days.

5) On the 76th day, add the next section... perhaps Matthew 13-15. Do these chapters for 25 days, while continuing Matthew 1-5, 6-8, and 9-12. At the end of this period, you will have done Matthew 1-5 for 100 days, Matthew 6-8 for 75 days, and Matthew 9-12 for 50 days, and Matthew 13-15 for 25 days. As in a high school, Matthew 1-5 is your "senior class", Matthew 6-8 your "junior class," Matthew 9-12 your "sophomore class," and Matthew 13-15 your "freshman class." The entire reciting process should take no more than 45 minutes, if you've done your timing right. ALSO NOTE... by this time, you should be able to recite Matthew 1-12 at least with no Bible at all... thus, it can be done while you do other things... thus, you will be sitting and doing nothing but memorization for no more than 15-20 minutes at most.

6) On the 101st day, you can "graduate" Matthew 1-5, and either "kiss it goodbye" or stick it into a "Monday slot" to do it for the rest of your life. You have done it so many times at this point, you could recite it in your sleep. (Perhaps you do!) Simply recite it every Monday, in addition to the ongoing work you're doing... or, of that's too much, just review it once a month to keep it fresh.

Now, add the next "ten minutes" of Matthew, to replace the "senior class" that just graduated... perhaps its Matthew 16-19. Keep on going with Matthew 6-8 (your new "senior class"), Matthew 9-12 ("junior class"), and Matthew 13-15 ("sophomore class"). At the end of this next

period, you will have done Matthew 6-8 for 100 days, Matthew 9-12 for 75 days, Matthew 13-15 for 50 days, and Matthew 16-19 for 25 days.

7) On the 126th day, “graduate” Matthew 6-8, and either “kiss it goodbye” or stick it into a “Tuesday slot” to do it for the rest of your life. Add Matthew 20-22, and continue. At the end of this next period, you will have done Matthew 9-12 for 100 days, Matthew 13-15 for 75 days, Matthew 16-19 for 50 days, and Matthew 20-22 for 25 days.

8) On the 151st day, “graduate” Matthew 9-12, and either “kiss it goodbye” or stick it into a “Wednesday slot” to do it for the rest of your life. Add Matthew 23-25, and continue. At the end of this next period, you will have done Matthew 13-15 for 100 days, Matthew 16-19 for 75 days, Matthew 20-22 for 50 days, and Matthew 23-25 for 25 days.

9) On the 176th day, “graduate” Matthew 13-15, and either “kiss it goodbye” or stick it into a “Thursday slot” to do it for the rest of your life. Add Matthew 26-27, and continue. At the end of this next period, you will have done Matthew 16-19 for 100 days, Matthew 20-22 for 75 days, Matthew 23-25 for 50 days, and Matthew 26-27 for 25 days.

10) On the 201st day, you can “graduate” Matthew 16-19, and either “kiss it goodbye” or stick it into a “Friday slot” to do it for the rest of your life. Now you can finally add Matthew 28 to your review cycle. Continue on, but add no new verses. Go until you have finished your 100 days on Matthew 28 (the 300th day). After about 25 days of doing Matthew 28, you should be able to recite the entire Gospel of Matthew at a good rate of accuracy, totally from memory. At that point, you can fall on your knees and give thanks to God for His goodness to you. But keep doing your work until you’ve finished your 100 days for all verses.

11) Review each section one a week or once a month as you feel the need, in order to keep it fresh, or “kiss it all goodbye” and memorize the Gospel of John (or the Book of Daniel... whatever excites your heart!)

It is my prayer that God will raise up a generation of people who do this labor, thus presenting themselves to God as those approved, workers who do not need to be ashamed, and who correctly handle the Word of Truth. (cf. 2 Timothy 2:15) The lost people in our nation and the weak and immature churches which have so proliferated are in deep need of the meat of the Word and those qualified to give it to them. May God bless your diligence and hard work!

Appendix 1

Ephesians Weekly Schedule

Weeks	New Verses	Old Verses
Week 1	Ephesians 1:1-1:6	
Week 2	Ephesians 1:7-1:12	Ephesians 1:1-1:6
Week 3	Ephesians 1:13-1:18	Ephesians 1:1-1:12
Week 4	Ephesians 1:19-2:1	Ephesians 1:1-1:18
Week 5	Ephesians 2:2-2:7	Ephesians 1:1-2:1
Week 6	Ephesians 2:8-2:13	Ephesians 1:1-2:7
Week 7	Ephesians 2:14-2:19	Ephesians 1:1-2:13
Week 8	Ephesians 2:20-3:3	Ephesians 1:1-2:19
Week 9	Ephesians 3:4-3:9	Ephesians 1:1-3:3
Week 10	Ephesians 3:10-3:15	Ephesians 1:1-3:9
Week 11	Ephesians 3:16-3:21	Ephesians 1:1-3:15
Week 12	Ephesians 4:1-4:6	Ephesians 1:1-3:21
Week 13	Ephesians 4:7-4:12	Ephesians 1:1-4:6
Week 14	Ephesians 4:13-4:18	Ephesians 1:1-4:12
Week 15	Ephesians 4:19-4:24	Ephesians 1:1-4:18
Week 16	Ephesians 4:25-4:30	Ephesians 1:1-4:24
Week 17	Ephesians 4:31-5:4	Ephesians 1:1-4:30
Week 18	Ephesians 5:5-5:10	Ephesians 1:1-5:4
Week 19	Ephesians 5:11-5:16	Ephesians 1:1-5:10
Week 20	Ephesians 5:17-5:22	Ephesians 1:1-5:16
Week 21	Ephesians 5:23-5:28	Ephesians 1:1-5:22
Week 22	Ephesians 5:29-6:1	Ephesians 1:1-5:28
Week 23	Ephesians 6:2-6:7	Ephesians 1:1-6:1
Week 24	Ephesians 6:8-6:13	Ephesians 1:1-6:7
Week 25	Ephesians 6:14-6:19	Ephesians 1:1-6:13
Week 26	Ephesians 6:20-6:24	Ephesians 1:1-6:19

Appendix 2

Sample Weekly Schedule

WEEK 1 Ephesians 1:1-6	Yesterday's Verse	Old Verses Together	New Verse
Day 1			Ephesians 1:1
Day 2	Ephesians 1:1	Ephesians 1:1	Ephesians 1:2
Day 3	Ephesians 1:2	Ephesians 1:1-2	Ephesians 1:3
Day 4	Ephesians 1:3	Ephesians 1:1-3	Ephesians 1:4
Day 5	Ephesians 1:4	Ephesians 1:1-4	Ephesians 1:5
Day 6	Ephesians 1:5	Ephesians 1:1-5	Ephesians 1:6
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WEEK 24 Ephesians 6:8-13	Yesterday's Verse	Old Verses Together	New Verse
Day 1	Ephesians 6:7	Ephesians 1:1-6:7	Ephesians 6:8
Day 2	Ephesians 6:8	Ephesians 1:1-6:8	Ephesians 6:9
Day 3	Ephesians 6:9	Ephesians 1:1-6:9	Ephesians 6:10
Day 4	Ephesians 6:10	Ephesians 1:1-6:10	Ephesians 6:11
Day 5	Ephesians 6:11	Ephesians 1:1-6:11	Ephesians 6:12
Day 6	Ephesians 6:12	Ephesians 1:1-6:12	Ephesians 6:13

Appendix 3

Verses per book

Old Testament Books	Number of Verses		
Genesis	1533	Song of Solomon	117
Exodus	1213	Isaiah	1292
Leviticus	859	Jeremiah	1364
Numbers	1288	Lamentations	154
Deuteronomy	959	Ezekiel	1273
Joshua	658	Daniel	357
Judges	618	Hosea	197
Ruth	85	Joel	73
1 Samuel	810	Amos	146
2 Samuel	695	Obadiah	21
1 Kings	816	Jonah	48
2 Kings	719	Micah	105
1 Chronicles	942	Nahum	47
2 Chronicles	822	Habakkuk	56
Ezra	280	Zephaniah	53
Nehemiah	406	Haggai	38
Esther	467	Zechariah	211
Job	1070	Malachi	55
Psalms	2461		
Proverbs	915		
Ecclesiastes	222		
New Testament Books	Number of Verses		
Matthew	1071	1 Timothy	113
Mark	678	2 Timothy	83
Luke	1151	Titus	46
John	879	Philemon	25
Acts	1007	Hebrews	303
Romans	433	James	108
1 Corinthians	437	1 Peter	105
2 Corinthians	257	2 Peter	61
Galatians	149	1 John	105
Ephesians	155	2 John	13
Philippians	104	3 John	14
Colossians	95	Jude	25
1 Thessalonians	89	Revelation	404
2 Thessalonians	47		

Andy was born in Boston, Massachusetts where he later earned his bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering from MIT in 1984. He then began his career as a Mechanical Engineer with Eaton-Nova Corporation in Beverly, Massachusetts. He and his wife Christi married on May 14, 1988, and they have two sons (Nathaniel & Calvin) and three daughters (Jenny, Carolyn, & Daphne).



Andy started his seminary training while working as an engineer and earned his Masters of Divinity from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in 1990. In 1992, Andy resigned from his engineering position to pastor the New Meadows Baptist Church in Topsfield, Massachusetts. The Davis family followed the call of the Lord to Tokushima, Japan, where they were involved in church planting through the International Mission Board from 1993-1995. Andy graduated from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY, with a Ph.D. in Church History in 1998. In October of 1998, Andy accepted a call to be the senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Durham, NC. He has also served Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, NC as Visiting Professor of Historical Theology from 2005 until the present.

*Andy is the author of various articles, book chapters, and books, and recently published *An Infinite Journey*, publisher Ambassador International, 2014.*

The passion of Andy's life is using the perfect Word of God to minister to people and advance the Kingdom of Jesus Christ in Durham and to the ends of the earth.



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