

Memorize the Mind of God

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You've heard the pitch for Scripture memory a thousand times. You're persuaded the benefits would be incalculable, and that there may be no better use of your time than to hide God's word in your heart and store it away for future use. But you've tried your hand at it again and again, and just never got the magic working.

Perhaps it brought back some sentiment you couldn't shake from rote memorization in grade school, or eventually you threw up your hands and blamed it on a bad memory. You knew it would be wonderful to have a store of Scripture treasured up, or an arsenal of weapons stockpiled for the Spirit's use. But if it was all oriented on saving up for some uncertain future time, and had little to do with today, you likely didn't feel much urgency about it.

But maybe the breakthrough could come with some simple change in perspective.

What if Scripture memory really was about today? At least for a minute, forget decades from now; throw aside the litany of daily reviews of previously memorized texts; abandon the mentality of building the store and stocking the pile, at least as the driving motivation. Instead, focus on the present. Scripture memory, at its best, is about feeding your soul today and mapping your life and mind onto the very life and mind of God.

Mold Your Mind for Today

It's all well and good to store up bright treasures and sharp weapons for future use, but if you're cut from the cloth I am, you find it all too easy to put it off when every day seems to already have enough trouble of its own (Matthew 6:34^[1]). Maybe the discovery you've needed to finally make some tracks is simply applying this line from the Lord's Prayer to Bible memorization: *Give us this day our daily bread* (Matthew 6:11^[2]).

When we learn the Scriptures by heart, we're not just memorizing ancient, enduringly relevant texts, but we're listening to and learning the voice of our Creator and Redeemer himself. When we memorize lines from the Bible, we are shaping our minds in the moment to mimic the structure and mindset of the mind of God.

Good theology forms our minds in a general way to think God's thoughts after him. But memorized Scripture molds our minds, with as much specificity as is humanly possible, to mimic the folds and creases in the mind of God. Theology gets us to the ballpark; memorized Scripture, into the clubhouse.

And so Bible memory not only prepares us for the someday-maybes when we use a memorized verse in counseling or witnessing or fighting sin, but it contributes powerfully in the present to making us the kind of person who walks in the Spirit today. It contributes right now to your being "renewed in the spirit of your minds" (Ephesians 4:23^[3]), and being "transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2^[4]). Not only is it then accessible to us for future decision-making and temptation-battling in varying contexts, but the very act of memorizing Scripture, as we understand and engage with the meaning of the text, changes our

minds in the present to make us the kind of people who “discern what is the will of God.”

Memorizing God’s words today, then, is not just a deposit into an account for tomorrow, but assets working for us right now.

Memorizing God’s words is not just a deposit into an account for tomorrow, but assets working for you right now. Tweet [5]

Some Call It “Meditation”

Note the disclaimer above: “as we understand and engage with the meaning of the text.” That is, as we flood the process of memorization with the spiritual discipline, and lost art, some call “meditation^[6].”

There’s nothing necessarily New Age or Transcendental about meditation. The old-school version, commended throughout the Bible, is thinking deeply about some truth from the mouth of God, and rolling it around in our minds long enough that we feel a sense of its significance in our hearts, and then even begin to envision its application in our lives. Making meditation work in tandem with Scripture memory has tremendous bearing on how we go about the arduous process. For one, it makes us slow down. We can memorize things much faster if we don’t pause to grasp and ponder. When we take meditation seriously, we seek not only to understand what we are memorizing, but also to linger over it, and feel it, and even begin to apply it as we memorize.

When we pursue Scripture memory with meditation, we’re not just storing up for transformation later, but enjoying food for our soul and experiencing transformation today. And when the focus is more on feeding and shaping, then constant review is less important. Once-memorized, now-forgotten texts aren’t a tragedy, but an opportunity to meditate and mold your mind even more.

Reset Your Mind on the Things of the Spirit

Another important benefit today, not just in the future, is how Bible memory with

meditation refocuses our souls for the business of the day. It is a way to reset our minds “on the things of the Spirit” and then “live according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:5^[7]), which “is life and peace” (Romans 8:6^[8]).

The mingling of meditation with memorization helps us obey the command of Colossians 3:2^[9]: “Set your minds on things that are above.” It dials us in for the day with “spiritual truths to those who are spiritual,” rather than walking like “the natural person” who “does not accept the things of the Spirit of God” (1 Corinthians 2:13–14^[10]). And when we reset ourselves on the things of the Spirit by molding our minds with the words of God, the result is simply remarkable. Paul asks with Isaiah, “Who has understood *the mind of the Lord* so as to instruct him?” and answers with this stunning revelation: “we have *the mind of Christ*” (1 Corinthians 2:16^[11]; Isaiah 40:13^[12]).

The Mind of Christ Is Yours

In other words, the apostle has two answers to the question, *Who has known the mind of the Lord?* The first is implied in the rhetorical question of Romans 11:34^[13]: “Who has known *the mind of the Lord*, or who has been his counselor?” Answer: No one. His mind is infinitely beyond ours. “How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable are his ways!” (Romans 11:33^[14]). No human may fully know the mind of God.

And yet Paul gives this second answer in 1 Corinthians 2:16^[15]: “we have *the mind of Christ*.” As we not only read and study the Scriptures, but understand them, and then meditate on and memorize them, we increasingly “have the mind of Christ” as we are conformed to his image. We cannot know the mind of God exhaustively, but we can make real progress in degrees. And few ways, if any, imprint the mind of God on our minds like memorization, with meditation, of what he has so plainly said in the Scriptures.

Two Great Effects

One other text mentions “the mind of Christ” and points to two great effects of memorizing the mind of God.

Philippians 2:5^[16], as the introduction to the famous “Christ hymn” of Philippians 2:6–11^[17], says, “Have this *mind* among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.” And what will that mean? Two clear things in the immediate context are *unity* (Philippians 1:27–2:2^[18]) and *humility* (Philippians 2:3–4^[19]).

There is no better tuning fork for harmony in the body of Christ than the members striving together to conform their minds to the mind of Christ, not just with Christian concepts, but with the very words of God. Having the mind of Christ will make us catalysts for a community “standing firm in one spirit, with *one mind* striving side by side for the faith of the gospel” (Philippians 1:27^[20]), and “being of *the same mind*, having the same love, being in full accord and of *one mind*” (Philippians 2:2^[21]).

And such “unity of mind” goes hand in hand with “a humble mind” in 1 Peter 3:8^[22]. Few things cultivate humility of mind like submitting our minds to the words of God by memorizing them. And so we become people ready to

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. (Philippians 2:3–4^[23])

Hide his words in your heart; build an arsenal for fighting temptation. But don’t miss the life-changing power today of memorizing the mind of God.

Related Resources:

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David Mathis (@davidcmathis) is executive editor at desiringGod.org and an elder at Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis. He has edited several books, including Thinking.

Loving. Doing.^[25], *Finish the Mission*^[26], and *Acting the Miracle*^[27], and is co-author of *How to Stay Christian in Seminary*^[28].

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