

## Practice: **Scripture Memory**

- *Spend time throughout the week reading, meditating on, and praying through these scriptures.*
- *Read the attached readings with enough time to really process through the content.*
- *Memorize one verse/passage of scripture this week*

1 These are the commands, decrees and laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, 2 so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. 3 Hear, Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, promised you.

4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. 7 Impress 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. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

**Deuteronomy 6:1-9 New International Version (NIV)**

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15 and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

**2 Timothy 3:14-17 New International Version (NIV)**

12 For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

**Hebrews 4:12 New International Version (NIV)**

Do not conform 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 New International Version (NIV)**

8 Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; 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.

**Joshua 1:8 New International Version (NIV)**

### **John Ortberg, The Life You Always Wanted: Excerpts from Ch. 11:**

... Purity is a word greatly prized in the New Testament.... The opposite of this uncontaminated condition is what the apostle James called “double-mindedness.”

Another way to think of double-mindedness is to regard a life of divided loyalties. James used the image of a person being “like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.”

Every once in a while we observe someone whose life is about one thing. That person has a singleness of purpose and focus that gives consistency to his or her choices and commitments. Some public figures are so closely associated with a single-minded purpose—in image if not reality—that their names bring to mind one overriding word: Donald Trump (money), Napoleon (power), Hugh Hefner (lust), Imelda Marcos (shoes).

When we live a life of [double-mindedness], we both desire intimacy with God and flee from it. We long to be generous, but we also hoard and covet. We sometimes attempt to be servants and sometimes are driven by arrogance and self-serving. Even the apostle Paul faced this struggle: “I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.”

[Jesus even spoke about this when He said:] “Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” There is an echo of this thought in Jesus’ words to a friend named Martha. This follower “was distracted by her many tasks” and resented her sister, Mary, who had chosen simply to sit in the presence of Jesus. “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing.” The secret of life is—one thing.

There is unbelievable relief in being delivered from double-mindedness, in finally deciding on the focus of life.

### **The Bible and Transformation**

If we want to be saved from double-mindedness, we must “be transformed by the renewing of your minds.” An indispensable practice is to have our minds re-formed by immersing them in Scripture. The psalmist writes of hiding God’s Word in our hearts so that we might not sin. So how do we read the Bible in a way that will purify our hearts and help us live as Jesus would in our place? Let us start by looking at a metaphor from the Bible itself.

When Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus, telling the husbands to love their wives, he used this analogy: “...just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish.”

We—the new community, the bride—are to be washed by “the Word.” What does this mean?

Consider what happens when something doesn’t get washed as it should. ...

By contrast, think of what happens when something does get washed. Soap and water move through the fibers of the dirty fabric at the deepest level, lifting out the impurities and removing them. Only after the washing can we see the fabric in the state for which it was originally designed. When we come to God, our minds and hearts are like that, cluttered with “false beliefs and attitudes, deadly feelings, misguided plans and hopes and fears.”

...Imagine having a mind cleansed of all the debris that blocks our best intentions. Imagine if each time you saw another person your first thought was to pray for him or bless her. Imagine what it would be like if, any time you were challenged or anxious, your reflexive response would be to turn to God for strength. Imagine, if you’re a married man, that whenever you looked at any woman other than your wife you would see her as if she were your sister or your daughter. Imagine genuinely wishing your “enemies” well.

That's what it would be to have the mind "washed by the Word." This is what it means to "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." This is how we are to be transformed by Scripture. This is our great need.

So the Bible is to help us learn how to live in the kingdom of God here and now. It teaches us how to morph. It is indispensable for this task. I have never known someone leading a spiritually transformed life who had not been deeply saturated in Scripture.

Paul writes about this role of Scripture in this famous statement: "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God might be proficient, equipped for every good work."

...If the Bible were to completely fulfill its mission, our minds would be so transformed—so filled with thoughts and feelings of truth, love, joy, and humility—that our lives would become one uninterrupted series of acts of grace and moral beauty. Every moment would be a miniature reflection of life in the kingdom of God.

So we need to develop the practice of meditating on the Scriptures. This is not quite the same thing as Bible study, although that is critically important, too. The purpose of meditation is to have our minds "washed by the Word." Here are some suggestions for the practice of meditating on Scripture.

### **1. Ask God to Meet You in Scripture**

Before you begin reading, take a moment to ask God to speak to you. Then as you read, anticipate that he will do so. .... The message of the Bible is not just that help is coming—it has arrived: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," Jesus said. So before you begin to read, acknowledge that Jesus is present with you. Ask him to begin to wash your mind, your thoughts—even if the cleanser stings a bit.

### **2. Read the Bible in a Repentant Spirit**

Read the Bible with a readiness to surrender everything. Read it with a vulnerable heart. Read it wisely, but understand that reading for transformation is different from reading to find information or to prove a point. Resolve that you will be obedient to the Scriptures.

... To be filled with knowledge about the Bible but to be unwashed by it is worse than not knowing it at all. ... when it comes to reading Scripture, the key question is not "how much," but "how."

It is possible to read Scripture without being "washed by the Word." Scripture itself speaks of just such a condition. Jesus addressed religious leaders who prided themselves on how well they knew the sacred writings. "You search the Scriptures," Jesus said, "because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf. Yet you refuse to come to me to have life." The religious leaders thought their great knowledge of Scripture was proof of their spiritual greatness. But they never allowed the Bible's teachings on humility to cleanse their mind of pride, never allowed its teachings on love to purge their judgmentalism, so they did not recognize the truth of Jesus' teaching.

### **3. Meditate on a Fairly Brief Passage or Narrative**

It is important to be familiar with all of the Bible. In times of study we will need to read broadly and cover a great deal of material. But in reading for transformation we have to go slowly.

... So immerse yourself in a short passage of Scripture—perhaps a few verses. Read it slowly. Read it the way you would read a love letter at the height of romance. Certain words may stand out to you; allow them to sink into your heart. Ask if perhaps God wants to speak to you through these words. The question that always lies behind such reading is, "God, what do you want to say to me in this moment?"

...If you are like me, this kind of reading means that you will have to adjust your attitude. Success is not measured by the number of pages read. Sometime ago I set a goal of praying through the psalms, one psalm a day.

... But a strange thing happened. I found that my goal became to get through the psalms. Each day that I did one, I could chalk it off my list, for I was one step closer to the goal. This meant, of course, that I never wanted to get stuck on one psalm two days in a row—that would keep me from my goal.

... Naturally, this utterly sabotaged God's real purpose in giving the psalms in the first place. God wants to speak to us, to renew us. And if he is using one psalm, or even one word, to do this, our job is to stick with it as long as it takes to learn what we need to learn.

The goal is not for us to get through the Scriptures. The goal is to get the Scriptures through us.

... Take any person you know whose knowledge of the Bible is, say, ten times greater than that of the average unchurched person. Then ask yourself if this person is ten times more loving, ten times more patient, and ten times more joyful than the average unchurched person.

Knowledge about the Bible is an indispensable good. But knowledge does not by itself lead to spiritual transformation. When Paul urged the Christians at Rome to "be transformed by the renewing of your minds," he was thinking of far more than just the acquisition of information.

... Moreover, while knowledge is vital and should be prized, it also poses some dangers. It often demolishes humility. The sobriquet "know-it-all" is never used as a compliment. The Bible itself contains some warnings: "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up."

#### **4. Take One Thought or Verse with You Through the Day**

The psalmist says that fruitful living comes to the person who meditates on the law "day and night." That appears to cover every part of the day....We can't meditate fast.

... Meditation is important enough to be mentioned more than fifty times in the Old Testament. It means not only to think about God's Word, but also to read it aloud. Reading the Scriptures out loud gives the reader focused attention and the advantage of learning by both eye and ear.

... Meditation is not meant to be esoteric or spooky or reserved for gurus reciting mantras in the lotus position. It merely implies sustained attention. It is built around this simple principle: "What the mind repeats, it retains."

#### **5. Allow This Thought to Become Part of Your Memory**

Memorizing Scripture is one of the most powerful means of transforming our minds. "I have hidden your word in my heart," the psalmist wrote, "that I might not sin against you."

Memorize statements from Scripture that will help you in matters in which you need it most. For instance, if you wrestle with fear, you may want to memorize Psalm 27:1: "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" If pride is a problem, try Philippians 2:3: "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves."

... Let us not forget that "the secret of life is pursuing one thing." And as Kierkegaard said, "Purity of heart is to will one thing." The words that bombard us all day long from billboards and tabloids and talk shows pull us in a thousand directions. But the word God speaks to us from his Word can renew our minds.