

# Why Our Whole Church Should Memorize Bible Verses Together

Our Plan of Action for our 2007-2008 Fighter Verses

*"I have stored up Your Word in my heart,  
That I might not sin against You."  
- Psalm 119:11*

*The Best Thing – His Word  
In the Best Place – My Heart  
For the Best Reason – So I Will Not Sin Against My Lord*

**Proposal:** As shepherds of your souls, we, the elders of Grace Fellowship Church, want all of us to memorize the Word of God together every week.

"Bible memorization is absolutely fundamental to spiritual formation. If I had to choose between all the disciplines of the spiritual life, I would choose Bible memorization, because it is a fundamental way of filling our minds with what it needs. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth. That's where you need it! How does it get in your mouth? Memorization!"

-- Dallas Willard ("Spiritual Formation in Christ for the Whole Life and Whole Person" in *Vocatio*, Vol. 12, no. 2, Spring, 2001, p. 7)

## **Why Should We Do This?**

### **1. No More Casualties.**

Some have fallen hard because they have not been well-armed for the battle. Ps 119: 11 makes it clear that one crucial part of fighting sin is storing up or treasuring the Word in our hearts.

### **2. Holiness is Our Purpose.**

We ought to often pray with McCheyne: “Lord, make me as godly as a saved sinner can be!” Anything less than this desire is idolatry and unworthy of our calling. In Ps 119:11 God has instructed us on how to be godly... we dare not neglect his direction!

### **3. Memorizing Forces Meditation.**

Meditation is everywhere commanded in the Bible and church history has proven that our heroes of the faith have been men and women who meditated on the Word—often through memorization (Philippians 4:8).

### **4. This Will Help Fathers.**

Those with children still at home, who are desirous of being spiritual leaders, now have a tool to help them lead and shepherd their families. The family could spend two minutes before every dinner working on the verse of the week and fathers can teach the meaning and give application.

### **5. Memorizing Will Increase Our Fellowship.**

Every week we will have truth we have been considering and pondering together and this will provide a good launching pad to direct our conversation to spiritual matters. Also, over the years we will be able to draw one another back to the “old paths” by referring to Scriptures we have learned together.

### **6. Memorizing Will Not Harm You.**

How many hours do we spend in a week in mindless or mind-numbing activity? Will one hour less of television per week harm your spiritual life? Will memorizing and meditating on a different verse each week do you injury? Surely, this is the least we can do!

### **7. Are We Content with Our Sin?**

Do we think so little of sin (and hence, of God) that we are content with our spiritual maturity—thinking that we have “arrived” or at least gotten to a place where we do not have to work so hard anymore? May it never be! The best reason to memorize is so that we “might not sin against” our Lord. The godly understand that their sin is never only against themselves or another—all sin is ultimately aimed at and offensive to God (Psalm 51). Not one of these sins is excusable or winked at—they are all punished on the cross. Do I disdain the cross and the sufferings of Jesus so much that I am not willing to give my all to never sin again?

### **8. Memorizing Aids Delighting.**

As we have seen in the past, one of the primary means to delighting in God is pondering His glorious Word. Our purpose is “Delighting in God to the glory of God” and so we are committed to actually doing it—not just thinking about it.

### **9. This is Counter-Cultural.**

Sometimes it is very healthy to live against the flow of the culture in order to make our faith in Christ more visible to our own eyes. Most people only think about work, sports, news, family and sleep—who ponders the glories of our Saviour? Memorizing the Word together makes us stand out in bold relief, like the rock in the middle of the river—holding firm against the current. This is healthy.

### **10. Memorizing Improves Our Souls.**

Remember Scougal’s profound words: “The excellency of a soul is to be measured by the object of its love...”. Do I love the Word of God? If I do, I will treasure it in my heart. I will yearn for it, adore it, think on it, look forward to it and ponder it deeply.

### **11. We Will Be Better Counsellors.**

Of what profit is Godless, truthless, Wordless counsel? Part of our ministry to one another is to sharpen each other and help one another through the decisions of life. We need to own the Word in order to do this effectively and memorizing is one means of doing that.

### **12. No Hypocrisy.**

We will demonstrate to our children that memorizing is not just some game for kids, but it is the serious business of godly people. Our action of memorizing will value the Word before their eyes and show them that learning the Word is not just child’s play.

### 13. Armed For Battle.

The Devil never calls or e-mails ahead to tell you when you are going to be attacked. We must be well-armed and ready in advance for his wicked onslaughts and memorizing is one tool in our training. Remember Christian (from *Pilgrim's Progress*) as he fought Apollyon... what happened when he dropped his sword (the symbol of the Word of God)?

### Six Possible Objections to Memorizing Together

#### 1. "It is Too Hard."

Some of us find memorizing a four-digit P.I.N. a feat of genius! I am one of them... just ask my wife how many times I have had to call her from the grocery store to ask for those four digits! But, what good things in life are free (besides our salvation)? If it is good, it is worth working for. Besides this, the man who may take an easy 5 minutes to memorize compared to your agonizing 55 minutes, may struggle in other areas of life that are of no problem to you. Each one is different. But God does not offer an alternative plan for the slow of memory. We must heed the counsel of "the man after God's own heart" and store up that Word in our hearts. Your kids (if you have them) may lap you 13 times over before you finally get the verse down... but what lesson does that teach your kids? That you are a bad memorizer? No! It teaches your kids that you love the Word so much you will agonize and strive over it because it is worth it! They will learn, here is how vital the Word of God is!

#### 2. "Don't Force Me."

Someone will say, "Okay, I concede I need to memorize, but don't force me to memorize what everyone else is doing. I will do my own memorizing." Will you? How many verses did you memorize last year? How many the year before that? No one is seeking to stifle your "individuality," but here is a way we can help one another and grow closer together as a church family.

#### 3. "Nobody Will Do It."

You are absolutely right—unless you lead the way! What may feel like labour at first will quickly become routine down the road. Some things we just need to do.

#### 4. "I Have Other Verses I Want to Memorize."

Great! Do those as well!

#### 5. "We All Have Different Versions."

We will all memorize in the ESV. It is faithful to the original and yet understandable by the young. Even if you don't own one, the verses will be printed in this book, in the bulletins and available on the web.

#### 6. "I Don't Want To."

Perhaps you have no good reasons other than this. Then I urge you to heed the words of Hebrews 13:17 "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you." Do what is to *your* advantage and follow your leaders.

### So What's the Plan?

For this calendar year (starting now!) your elders have deliberately chosen "25 Verses to Live By!" We will do one verse per week from now through March (with two weeks on the incarnation before Christmas), then we'll repeat the same verses from March through September. It is our hope that by learning the verses twice they will really sink in.

We've been very intentional in trying to keep the verses as short as possible so that family members of all ages and abilities can keep up.

### How Will We Do This?

We will put each verse for the coming week in the Sunday bulletin and our website. Included below is a schedule of the verses for the whole year. This way if you're away for a week, you can still stay on track. Or, if you want to, you can even work ahead!

We will hold one another accountable in our memorizing by reciting these verses corporately at various meetings throughout the week. The children will memorize these verses for their GraceKids classes—one verse for all per week.

We understand that not all will learn every verse perfectly. Sometimes providence makes the task more difficult... but better to shoot for perfection and land a little lower, than aim low and get nothing done. Gird up your loins for action Grace Fellowship Church! Adopt that warfare mentality and get into boot camp. By God's grace, you can do it!

## 25 Verses to Live By!

Our strategy in choosing these verses was to pick five essential categories and then to select five verses for each of those categories.

### 1. The Character of God.

Under this category we've chosen verses which remind us both of the transcendence (bigness) of God, and the immanence (nearness) of God. Essential to Christian warfare is a balanced view of the God whom we serve.

### 2. Jesus Christ.

Here we've selected verses which teach about Christ's divinity, his glory, his saving work, and his sacrificial love for his people. He is our hope (1 Tim. 1:1) and the Christian cannot fight effectively in the battle without a firm knowledge of his God and Saviour, Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13).

### 3. Salvation.

This category is obviously essential. It is the core of the gospel of the grace of God. Here we'll learn verses where our children will see how to be made right with God. These verses will aid all of us in our evangelistic efforts for the advancement of our King's kingdom!

### 4. Sanctification.

Sanctification is the process of battling to put to death the sin that remains in us, while training ourselves for growth in godliness (1 Cor. 9:24-27; 1 Tim. 4:8). Here we will learn of our great need for being intentional in our pursuit of holiness.

### 5. Christian Living.

Here we will memorize verses which will be for the purpose of encouraging our souls and giving us practical instruction on living life as a Christian in this fallen world. Our enemy loves to tempt us in many ways—we need the Word in our hearts to encourage and instruct us to know how to live in a way that pleases our King.

## The Schedule

**Sept. 9** – Ps 119 <sup>68</sup> You are good and do good; teach me your statutes.

**Sept. 16** – John 1 <sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God.

**Sept. 23** – Eph 2 <sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

**Sept. 30** – 1 Cor 10 <sup>13</sup> No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

**Oct. 7** – Ps 73 <sup>25</sup> Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. <sup>26</sup> My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

**Oct. 14** – Deut 6 <sup>4</sup> "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>5</sup> You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

**Oct. 21** – Col 1 <sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.

**Oct. 28** – Matt 11 <sup>28</sup> Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

**Nov. 4** – Gal 5 <sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

**Nov. 11** – Ps 56 <sup>3</sup> When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. <sup>4</sup> In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?

**Nov. 18** – Isa 46 <sup>9</sup> I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, <sup>10</sup> declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.'

**Nov. 25** – Heb 1 <sup>3a</sup> He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

**Dec. 2** – Rom 3 <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

**Dec. 9** – Rom 6 <sup>11</sup> So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

**Dec. 16** – Matt 1 <sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: <sup>23</sup> "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).

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**Dec. 30** – Heb 13 <sup>5</sup> Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." <sup>6</sup> So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"

**Jan. 6** – Lam 3 <sup>21</sup> But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: <sup>22</sup> The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; <sup>23</sup> they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

**Jan. 13** – Heb 2 <sup>18</sup> For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

**Jan. 20** – Rom 10 <sup>9</sup> because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ... <sup>13</sup> For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

**Jan. 27** – John 15 <sup>5</sup> I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

**Feb. 3** – Jas 1 <sup>2</sup> Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, <sup>3</sup> for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

**Feb. 10** – Ps 147 <sup>5</sup> Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.

**Feb. 17** – John 15 <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends.

**Feb. 24** – John 3 <sup>36</sup> Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

**Mar. 2** – Heb 12 <sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup> looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

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