

Bible Intake, Part 2

LAST time we began a discussion of the importance of the Bible in the Christian life. We studied three aspect of Bible intake:

1. Hearing the Bible discipline yourself to listen to the Word of God as it is proclaimed whenever you have an opportunity.
2. Reading the Bible discipline yourself to reading the Bible on a daily basis.
3. Studying the Bible discipline yourself to exegete the Bible. Acquire the necessary tools for Bible study.

Today we ll consider three more aspects of Bible intake

4. Memorizing God s Word

Texts:

Psalms 119:11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

Psalms 119:97 O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day.

Proverbs 22:17 19 Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge. For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips. That thy trust may be in the LORD, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee.



Matthew 4:4 But [Jesus] answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Memorizing Scripture is a difficult and time-consuming discipline, but one that is worth far more than it costs. When the Bible is stored in your mind, it is readily available when you need it. If a friend needs to hear a word of comfort, encouragement, or even rebuke, you have that capacity if you've memorized Scripture. When tempted to sin, you have a defense—quote Scripture, just like Jesus did when He was tempted. When faced by false doctrine, you know the truth and can give a ready defense if you've got the passages memorized. Further, the New Testament authors repeatedly demonstrate that they memorized passages from the Old Testament. All the great Christian leaders from the past memorized passages from the Bible. Some have memorized vast sections of it. Clearly, memorizing Scripture is a valuable and necessary part of the Christian life.

Scripture memory is a matter of commitment, labor, and motivation. If you think that it's important and you work hard at it (i.e., discipline yourself), you can do it. You've memorized a lot of other data—birthdays, phone numbers, addresses, speeches, poems, jokes, etc. You can memorize the Bible.

So how does one go about memorizing Scripture?

Have a plan.

There are many published Scripture memory plans. The easiest plan is to select several verses that are meaningful to you and start working on these. Then as you read the Bible and find more memorable passages, add them to the list. Every day review the verses you already have memorized and work on memorizing the new ones.

Write or print out the verses on 3x5 cards.

This makes review easier. Cards are also portable. Work on them when waiting in line or when you have free time. Post the cards where you'll see them—on the fridge, on a mirror, on your steering wheel, etc.



Memorize the verses word perfectly.

Learn the reference as well.

Categorize the verses.

Arrange them according to topics.

REVIEW CONSTANTLY.

If you don't review the verses you've memorized, you'll soon lose them.

Find an accountability partner.

Work with someone who will encourage you to stay with it. Share the fun with someone else.

Like the other disciplines, memorization doesn't just happen. You've got to actively discipline yourself to memorize. If you work on it a little each day, you'll be surprised how quickly your list of memorized verses expands.

The goal in memorizing is not to see how many verses you can commit to memory. The goal is godliness. Memorizing Scripture helps transform your mind and life (Rom 12:2). If you are committed to growth and godliness, you'll also be committed to memorizing Scripture.

Meditate on God's Word

Texts:

Joshua 1:8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

Psalms 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

Psalms 119:99 I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.



The word “meditation” often prompts thoughts of Eastern religions or the New Age movement. But biblical meditation differs from other kinds of meditation in several ways:

Non-Christian Meditation	Christian Meditation
Empty your mind	Fill your mind with the Bible
Mentally passive	Mentally active
Create your own reality	Think about God’s reality
Unite with the universe	Fellowship with God

Meditation is simply dwelling mentally on a text of Scripture, soaking up the truths and principles of the Bible for the purpose of understanding, application and prayer. It is thinking about and appreciating the text—what it means, what it implies, whom it affects, how to obey it, etc. One selects an appropriate text, reads it a few times, and thoughtfully turns it over in his mind. He reflects on it for a while and considers its importance. One might then use it in prayer. It is often beneficial to jot down the results of meditation—your thoughts about the text, how you’ll apply it, questions about it, etc.

Biblical meditation has nothing to do with chanting, yoga, channeling, or any other similar mystical ideas. You don’t go into a trance or lose touch with reality. Quite the opposite is true. Times of meditation ought to be some of the most intellectually and spiritually stimulating occasions we experience.

“I seemed often to see so much light exhibited by every sentence, and such a refreshing food communicated, that I could not get along in reading; often dwelling long on one sentence to see the wonders contained in it, and yet almost every sentence seemed to be full of wonders.” Jonathan Edwards

Applying God’s Word

Applying the principles we learn as we partake of the Bible is one of the chief goals of Bible intake. We want to use what we learn.

Luke 6:46 And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?



John 13:17 If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

James 1:22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

Application answers the question, “So what? One should apply the principles of the Word to his life. Application is actually the third step in the exegetical process. One must first note what the text says (observation) and then figure out what it meant to the original audience (interpretation). Only after these first two critical steps is one ready to work out how one should apply the text personally. Great errors are made when the reader jumps right from what the text says to personal application without working out the interpretive details. Much of Scripture is not directly applicable to modern believers. For example, most of the Old Testament does not apply directly to the church. It is an error to apply Scripture in a way not intended by the author or by the Holy Spirit. This is where many of the cults and fringe groups go wrong.

Look for application as you read and study. The following questions may help you notice when application is necessary:

- Does this text reveal something I should believe?
- Does this text reveal something to praise or thank God for?
- Does this text reveal something I should pray about?
- Does this text reveal something I should change my attitude about?
- Does this text reveal something I should accept or reject?
- Does this text reveal something I should do for others or for myself?
- Does this text reveal a sin I should confess?
- How should I change my life in response to this text?

