



Chapter 6

I CAN'T MEMORIZE!

How many times have you heard it? Mention the idea of memorizing Scripture to the “unsuspecting” and what kind of response do you get? I’m often greeted with a quick, “Oh, I can’t memorize!” These three words seem to pop out of mouths before minds even have time to process the question. It’s like, “Wow! I’d better cut this short. This could get me into deeper stuff than I want to think about.”

When was the last time you asked someone about their place of employment, their address, or telephone number and had them respond, “Oh, I don’t know. I can’t memorize!” Perhaps you have noticed that this little cliché seems to be programmed for use only at the mention of *Scripture*?

Why do you think some people would want to be so flippant in response to a very reasonable subject of conversation? Why do some who profess to love and serve the Lord, seem to shrink from the very thought of hiding His Word in their hearts? Why do Christians from different parts of the country, with different backgrounds and interests, people who don’t even know each other, use these same three little words for a quick cop out?

No one knows what happens when God's people experience Scripture as it is intended better than our arch enemy, the great deceiver. He has been busy, especially in recent years, desensitizing God's people to its power and importance. He is the one who relates God's Word to hard work and legalism. A tree may only be a little off course to start with, but unless it corrects itself, it will veer further and further off course the more it grows. And as this satanic tree has taken root in God's family it has borne fruit and guided His children further and further off their intended course. Now we have reached the place where the very idea of memorizing Scripture, for many, is perceived as a tedious drudgery.

Men and women of God throughout the ages have relied on the power of memorized Scripture to sustain their daily walk with Him and offer strength and direction in trials. Memorizing Scripture has been the mainstay and joy of believers throughout the centuries and *God's Word has not changed*. It has not lost its power. God's command to His people still echoes through the centuries: "*Fix these words of Mine in your hearts and minds....*" (Deuteronomy 11:18-21).

And again in Ephesians 6:12 our Commander in Chief orders us to *take the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God* and *stand* against the enemy of our souls who constantly struggles for supremacy in our lives. But how many Christians today are armed and dangerous, prepared for the daily battle against the one who is out to kill, steal, and destroy everything we hold dear? It's not that God's warriors have laid down their arms. Many of us haven't even bothered to pick them up. Of what value is a soldier in a war without a weapon?

And what military genius in all the world could ever convince an opposing army to lay down their weapons, even before they have picked them up, by simply telling the rank and file that they were completely incapable of obeying their Commander-in-Chief? But what do we hear from God's rank and file? "Take the Sword of the Spirit? Memorize God's Word? Why would He give such an order? I can't memorize!"

And what does one who says he "can't memorize Scripture" use for defense if enemy attacks occur when he doesn't have his Bible in hand? Not only is he at war with no Sword, he has conceded the battle with no contest having let enemy chicanery convince him that no defense was necessary or even possible and that any effort on his part to protect himself is basically useless. Whoever would have thought that we could have strayed so far from our roots and that Satan could so skillfully deceive some of God's elect with such wiles?

But if God's orders to His army haven't changed, and if His Word is still the same sharp, powerful weapon it has always been, what happened? What brought about this astounding deterioration of morale and caused rebellion in the ranks? How could it be that so many 21st Century Christians would simply reject the orders of their Commander-in-Chief and unilaterally declare them null and void, thus leaving themselves defenseless against an aggressive and ruthless enemy?

You can be sure of two things: it didn't happen by coincidence and it didn't just happen overnight. In the early years of the Roman church, the Bible was basically in the hands of the church hierarchy, so Satan focused on them. He managed to pollute biblical teaching by luring

these religious pontiffs into unspeakable corruption. Recognizing the controlling power they exercised over the downtrodden and oppressed, these men invented their own laws and religious edicts to accommodate their depraved appetites.

They used bribery and even committed murder in order to gain political advancement. They lived lavishly and built up their personal fortunes by confiscating property, selling church offices, and levying cruel taxes on those already in abject poverty. They satisfied their odious lusts by sexually exploiting virgins, wives, nuns, and young boys. Anyone who owned a Bible and/or disagreed with the dictates of the church hierarchy was declared to be a “heretic” and (in the name of Christ) innocent men and women were brutally tortured and burned at the stake. It was indeed “Dark Ages”, when the laity lived in subjection to cruel and unscrupulous church leaders who claimed exclusive rights to the Scriptures as self-proclaimed “vicars of Christ, holding on this earth the place of Almighty God”.*

It was the invention of the printing press in 1455 that sparked what is commonly known in history as the Reformation. At that time, the Lord raised up godly men whose names stand out in history as some who proclaimed sound biblical teaching and fought for the right of the common man to have access to God’s Word for themselves. Among them were Giralomo Savonarola in Italy (1452-1498), Martin Luther in Germany (1483-1546), William Tyndale in England (1494-1536) and John Calvin in France and Switzerland (1509-1564). All of these men and many others were persecuted and/or burned at the

stake for renouncing the corrupt practices taught by the reigning church. They gave their lives to make the Scriptures available to the common man.

Today, you and I bask in their accomplishments giving little thought to the price that was paid on our behalf. From that era when Scripture was so precious, the pendulum has now swung to the other end of the spectrum as today we are lavished with an abundance of Bibles and translations that fill our shelves. Having lost the battle of being able to keep the Scriptures out of our hands, the enemy of our souls has had to pursue more devious and subtle tactics of control. Realizing the danger of what can happen when Christians experience the power and the joy that is available to them in God's Word, he has worked hard to guide them away from its influence in their lives. He has even gained some success with the idea that Scripture is something of an unwelcome interruption in their daily agenda to the point where even reading it, for some, has become a laborious chore.

And memorizing it?? Well, he has gained even more ground there, managing to convince a good portion of God's army that this is an accomplishment completely beyond their capabilities, or that they have no time in their busy schedules for such a superfluous activity.

It's difficult to understand how satanic forces could beguile their way right into our midst, but they have! Some of us who have actually swallowed their demonic lies are so completely convinced, we have no qualms whatsoever about overtly notifying anyone who brings up the subject, "Oh, I can't memorize!" Could it be that the great deceiver has actually made the greatest joy and privilege available

to God's people as well as their most powerful weapon into a stigma that many seem anxious to avoid?

Has he convinced you that you are incapable of memorizing God's Word? Do you consider the mighty Sword of the Spirit, the weapon our God has provided for His people to use in the every day battle of life, to be beyond your grasp? Do you contend that even though the Lord has commanded you to take the Spirit's Sword and hide His Word in your heart, you are incapable of doing so?

Where did such thinking originate? Let's dig a little deeper. Look at Matthew 4:8-9:

Again, the devil took Him (Jesus) to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give You," he said, "if You will bow down and worship me."

Notice that Satan showed our Lord ...*all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor*. It must have been an awesome sight. Jesus was faced with a crucial choice. He knew that ahead was humiliation, rejection, and suffering of a magnitude never before (nor since) experienced by any other man. The great deceiver was anxious to divert His focus. The enemy knew well that if he could seduce our Lord into taking the easy way out, he would have won the battle of all times. He said, in essence, "I know God's plan for You. It's to rule the world, isn't it? But the way He has it planned is not going to be easy, and You don't need all that hassle. It's really not necessary. *There's an easier way*. I can just give it to You if You'll listen to me. This way You won't have to go

through all the pain and suffering You know is coming. I can take care of everything for You. Trust me!”

In the same way, Satan whispers into the believer's ear today, “Yes, I know God has said, ‘*take the Sword of the Spirit*’, but that command was written thousands of years ago. They didn't know then that Bibles would be as plentiful as they are today, did they? Memorizing Scripture is hard work. You don't need that hassle. It's really not necessary. *There's an easier way*. Just listen to me. You have your Bible. You can read it anytime you want, can't you? If anyone mentions *memorizing Scripture*, just say, ‘Oh, I can't memorize!’ That'll shut them up in a hurry. Trust me!”

There has to be no question but that the *I can't memorize* philosophy is the result of Satan's seductive arrows directed at our minds. It is satanic strategy to lure victims with the easy way out in order to rob them of the protection they need and the rich blessings our Lord longs for them to have. Don't be deceived. Life in this world will never be easy. We, as God's children, must constantly swim against the current to avoid being swept downstream with the crowd.

What was Jesus' response when the prince of this world tried to trick *Him*?

Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.’” (Matthew 4:10 - quoted from Deuteronomy 6:13)

Jesus used the trusty Sword of the Spirit, the Word hidden in His heart, to thwart the attack. We're told:

The Sword

Then the devil left Him.... (Matthew 4:11)

Even Jesus, the God-man, did not paraphrase or use a philosophical argument. In combat He relied solely on His most powerful weapon, the Word of God, the Spirit's Sword. Is this Sword a weapon that was available only to Jesus and a few others who have a special talent to memorize, but not for all of us?

Of course, it's true that some of us can memorize more easily than others. Every mind works differently. Some of us may need to work harder than others taking more advantage of helps and techniques. Also, as we get older, it does become more difficult. (Another good reason not to put it off.)

It's important for all of us to recognize that when the Lord commands us to do something, He doesn't expect us to accomplish it through our own strength. *The Lord's calling is His enabling* and He has exhorted us, actually, commanded:

Fix these words of Mine in your hearts and minds.... (Deuteronomy 11:18)

Take... the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. (Ephesians 6:17)

Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.... (Colossians 3:16)

And the Psalms abound with testimonies of those whose lives have been enriched as they have diligently followed these commands.

Blessing and prosperity:

Psalm 1:1-3 Blessed is the man (whose)... 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.

Stability:

Psalm 37:31 The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide. (KJV)

Delight in God's will:

Psalm 40:8 I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart. (KJV)

A righteous walk:

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

Comfort in adversity:

Psalm 119:61 The cords of the wicked have bound me, but I have not forgotten Your law. (NKJV)

Spiritual insight and guidance:

Psalm 119:130 The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple. (NKJV)

Praise and integrity:

Psalm 119:7 I will praise You with an upright heart as I learn Your righteous laws.

If you see yourself as one who *can't memorize*, then it must follow that the Lord has these blessings for others but doesn't intend for you to enjoy them. But then, we know this can't be true, so we must conclude that the one whose business it is to render us impotent has been successful in working his illusions. How well he knows that without a reassuring grip on the all-important Sword, we are not only defenseless against His wiles, we are being robbed of the abundant blessing our Lord wants to lavish on us through His Word.

If the enemy has been able to deceive you in the past with his handy little *I can't memorize* cliché, perhaps now is the time for you to take a stand against him! The Lord has given you powerful Scripture to combat his lies.

What is impossible from a human perspective is possible with God. (Luke 18:27, NLT)

For nothing is impossible with God. (Luke 1:37)

I can do everything with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need. (Philippians 4:13, NLT)

Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. (II Corinthians 3:5)

Evelyn was a 72-year-old widow, a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. She wrote:

There were passages of Scripture I had wanted to learn for years, but had convinced myself that I

couldn't do it so I didn't even try. Then when challenged to memorize a chapter, I thought, Why can't I do that if I ask the Lord to help me? I decided that it might take me longer than some, but I would trust the Lord and give it my best shot.

Although memorizing by chapter is proving to be more difficult for me than it is for younger people, and it's getting harder all the time, it's such a joy, I can't stop. I have a compulsive desire to learn more and more of God's Word.

I don't know why I was satisfied with random verses while growing up. If only I had learned by chapter when my mind was more receptive, it would have been so much easier. Also, while leading Jr. Church, I could have taught the children to memorize by chapter. Then they would have had God's Word *in context* to draw from throughout their lives.

I wish more would respond to the challenge of memorizing chapters. People don't know what they're missing. Sometimes they tell me they could never memorize like I do, but I disagree. I know they are as smart as I am. They could do it if only they would trust the Lord to help them, like I did.

At the time she wrote this, Evelyn had undergone open heart surgery and struggled with other physical problems but used her limitations to advantage. When forced to rest and during wakeful night hours, she memorized, reviewed, meditated, and delighted in the

Word. She had memorized Romans 12, Matthew 5, 6 and 7, as well as Psalms 1, 34 and 100, and was working on the book of I John when the Lord took her home to Himself. Now, I'm sure she's having the joy of quoting her Scripture to the King of all kings and the Lord of all lords *in person*.

If you have been like Evelyn and have been convinced that there was no point in your even trying to memorize God's all-powerful Word, you may want to consider this threefold approach:

1. Stop saying, "I can't memorize Scripture". When you promote this idea, you are actually "aiding and abetting" the enemy. In essence, you are working to bring about your own defeat as well as that of others around you.

2. Take the Lord at His word. He said our competence comes from Him. Jesus said, "*Everything is possible for him who believes.*" (*Mark 9:23*) Realize that you, too, can know the joy of memorizing, meditating, and delighting in God's Holy Word. You, too, can experience its power in your daily life. Trust your all-powerful God and enter into that joy.

3. Most importantly, do not look at Scripture memorization as a negative, legalistic exercise. This is seeing it through the eyes of your worst adversary. Our Lord intends for the memorization of His Word to be a blessing and a delight for His children. Shed the idea of merely memorizing words and anticipate the joy of getting to know the Author in new and exciting ways. Many people gave their lives in order for you to have this privilege.

I Can't Memorize!

You will find practical helps and pointers for getting started in other chapters of this book but as you begin memorizing, remember that you are not alone. Evelyn and others started right where you are now and by God's grace have emerged victorious. Always know that when the Lord commands us to do something, He will give us the ability to accomplish it.

....(He) is able to do infinitely more than we ever dare to ask or imagine. (Ephesians 3:20, Phillips)

*Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.
(Colossians 3:16)*

**H.H. Halley, Halley's Bible Handbook (Zondervan Publishing House, 88th printing, 1988) pp. 44-48*