

Devotional for January 22, 2021

By Major Brian Coles

I've got bad news and good news. The bad news is, a recent Life Way research study found that only 45 percent of those who regularly attend church read the Bible more than once a week.

Over 40 percent of the people attending read their Bible occasionally, maybe once or twice a month. Almost 1 in 5 churchgoers say they *never* read the Bible.

What that means is, many people, even churchgoers, are biblically illiterate. If that's the bad news, what's the good news?

The good news is, there is a solution to this problem of biblical illiteracy.

There is no quick-n-easy-cure-all solution that will suddenly remove biblical illiteracy. But there are things we can do to help us overcome this modern-day malady.

At the outset, let me say there are several different ways we can absorb God's word.

First, we can hear it. This is the simplest, least-difficult method of learning the Bible.

Second, we can read it. There are numerous versions and paraphrases available.

There is also a plethora of bible reading plans you can follow, some will even enable you to read the entire bible in one year.

Third, we can study it. With pen and paper or computer, and various reference works, like a bible dictionary, encyclopedia, and bible commentary, we can dig deeper into the bible to mine its treasures.

Fourth, we can meditate on it. As scripture is heard, read, and studied, we become reservoirs of biblical truth.

Those truths need to be thought through, pondered, personalized, and applied. When we meditate on scripture,

we allow God's word to speak to us, reprove us, warn us, encourage us, and comfort us.

Fifth, we can memorize it. Memorizing scripture is perhaps the most effective way to cultivate your r'ship with God through Jesus.

There are several bible verses worth mentioning when we think of memorizing God's word.

In Proverbs 4.4 we read, "Then he taught me, and he said to me, "Take hold of my words with all your heart."

Notice the words 'take hold'. In Hebrew, the verb is *saw-mack'* which means 'to grasp' or 'hold fast to'.

That same Hebrew verb is found in Isa. 41.10. which says, "Do not fear, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God.

I will strengthen you, surely I will help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

'Uphold you' is from the same Hebrew verb, *saw-mack'*. Memorizing scripture gives you a firm hold of, and confidence in, God and his word.

As God's word gets a grip on you, it upholds you.

Proverbs 6.20-22, "My son, keep your father's command and do not forsake your mother's teaching.

Bind them always on your heart; fasten them around your neck.

When you walk, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; when you awake, they will speak to you."

Notice the words 'bind them', 'fasten or tie them' around your neck. Scripture memory straps the truths of God to us.

Proverbs 7.2-3. "Keep my commands and you will live; guard my teachings as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart."

When we write something down, we don't confuse matters, we clarify them. So too when we write [or memorize] scripture.

Proverbs 22.17-18, "Pay attention and turn your ear to the sayings of the wise; apply your heart to what I teach,

for it is pleasing when you keep them in your heart and have all of them ready on your lips."

These are encouraging words for us. The idea of having God's word 'ready on your lips' convinces us of the importance of memorizing scripture.

Nothing will help solve the problem of biblical illiteracy like memorizing scripture.

So, here are 3 practical suggestions to help us memorize scripture.

1st, it's better to learn a few verses well than many poorly.

2nd, review often. The big secret to memorization is review. Review the verse or verses you have learned before going on to another.

3rd, use the verse you memorize. The purpose of scripture memorization is a practical one, not academic.

Who cares if you can spout off a dozen verses on loving your neighbour if you fail to show love to your neighbour?

Scripture memorization takes work, but it is well worth the effort. You will never regret the time you invest hiding God's word in your heart.