

# Hide God's Word in your heart

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In the western church today those who proclaim to follow Christ are often not very different from those who do not attend church. It seems that we have adopted the same goals, dreams, plans, priorities and desires as the world. We have been called out to be a holy people, a set apart people, but instead we resemble those who don't know Christ. We have gladly embraced the truth of God's love, but we have divorced the truth of God's law. Both have their place in the Christian life.

In the book of Galatians the Apostle Paul tells how we are free from the law. That is true. God's law no longer has the power to bring us fear, judgment and condemnation. Through faith we have been reconciled to God. We are free. We are now motivated by love and grace, and indebted to God for His goodness to us. But that does not mean that God's law has no role to play in the Christian life. Christianity is more than just having our hearts warmed by inspiring verses and getting caught up in the emotion of music. A call to follow Christ is a call to holiness, and God's law shows us the way of holiness.

Christianity is not all love with no law. It is not praying and then following whatever feeling or impression that you have, without submitting our thoughts and desires to biblical truths. The law is still our guide. We are no longer under law, we are under grace, but law still points us towards holiness, even though the motivation and power to obey it are driven by love. It is not a sloppy love, which follows impulsive emotional impression. There is still a holy order in the midst of loving God and loving our neighbor.

This importance of drawing near to God's law is referred to throughout Psalm 119. In this Psalm there are various terms that are synonymous with the phrase the "Word of God": Statutes, laws, rules, testimonies, precepts, commandments, judgments and ordinances. In the Christian life there is still a place for holiness that is directed by and submitted to God's law. While these verses come from the Old Testament, this pattern applies to the New Testament writings as well. In 2 Timothy 3:16, the apostle Paul puts it in these words, *"All scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for*

*correction and training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*" We cannot live a faithful Christian life without our hearts being submitted to God's Word.

It has been said before that God's Word will either keep you out of sin, or sin will keep you out of God's Word. This is often found to be true when considering Christians who are caught in sin or Christians who are struggling with issues such as bitterness, worry, pride, discontentment or apathy. A healthy, daily focus on God's Word does much to strengthen one's faith and holiness.

Psalm 119:9 says, *"How can a young man keep his way pure?"* Verse 11 responds saying, *"I have stored up your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."*

If we look at the first word, in that verse the psalmist says, *"I have stored up your word in my heart."* You could say that on "ground level" it was the act of the psalmist bringing it about. Throughout Psalm 119 we see the actions of the psalmist in regards to relating to God's Word. V. 15, *"I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways."* V. 8, *"I will keep your statutes."* V. 30, *"I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I set your rules before me."* V. 31, *"I cling to your testimonies, O Lord."* V. 44, *"I will keep your law continually, forever and ever."* V. 55, *"I remember your name in the night."* V. 57, *"I promise to keep your words."* V. 61, *"I do not forget your law."*

These verses, of all that we should do with God's Word, sound great. The only problem is that it is impossible. That is the pattern of scripture. God, time and again, calls His people to do the impossible. Love your enemy. Be angry and sin not. Do not covet. Do not worry. Do not look at others lustfully. Do not want revenge. Do not be proud. God calls us to the impossible so that we will turn to Him and find that it becomes possible.

But there is more to "storing God's Word in our hearts" than just what we can do in our own human efforts.

Storing up God's Word in our hearts is not merely an academic knowledge of Bible verses, even though it does include that. It is a deeper spiritual discernment of God's Word.

A wider look at Psalm 119 gives us the truth of what is happening from the perspective of heaven. The verses that follow are found intermingled with all of those "I" verses that we just read. Listen to who is doing the work in these verses. V. 10, *"Let me not wander from your commandments!"* V. 18, *"Open my eyes that I may behold the wondrous things out of your law."* V. 27, *"Make me understand the way of your precepts."* V. 29, *"Put false ways far from me and graciously teach me your law!"* V. 34, *"Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart."* V. 35, *"Lead me in the paths of your commandments for I delight in it."* V. 37, *"Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways."* V. 38, *"Confirm to your servant your promise . . ."* V. 68, *"Teach me your statutes."* V. 73, *"Give me understanding that I may learn your commandments."* V. 32, *"I will run in the way of your commandments when you enlarge my heart."*

We desperately need God's Word working in our hearts. But *"it is God works in you both to will and to act according to His purposes"* (Phil. 2:13). We are to store God's Word in our hearts, but it is God who guides, empowers and reveals.

We find this even more clearly in Ezekiel 36:26-27. In these verses God made a promise to the house of Israel. In the past they had profaned God's name among the nations, but now, to vindicate the holiness of His great name, God promised this, *"And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules."*

The way not to sin is to treasure God's Word in your heart. To make it your greatest treasure, where all sinful desires pale in comparison and lose their luster and draw. Where God's Word so reveals the true reality that all the superficial and counterfeit temptations of this world are exposed as null and void. And God is seen as most worthy of worship. Where our hearts are warmed to the truths of grace, mercy, holiness and unconditional love. So how do we store God's Word in our hearts?

Storing God's Word is more than just reading words on a page or on your phone. It is God's Word abiding in our hearts. God's Word taking root in us. In the Old Testament the idea of "heart" was a place of both feeling and thinking (Genesis 6:5; Job 36:13). It was the center or core of who a person was. It would be similar to our phrase of loving someone "with all of our heart" . . . with all that you are. We see a similar idea in Proverbs 4:23, where it reads, *"Guard your heart for it is the wellspring of life."*

As we think about "storing God's Word in our hearts" it is helpful to know that this word "storing" was at other times in the Old Testament translated as "hiding" or "treasuring." Since they did not have banks back in the Old Testament days, the words of storing and hiding were often used in reference to what one did with his treasure. In light of this, we too should store, or hide, or guard the priceless Word of God in our hearts.

As one seeks to defeat sin by hiding God's Word in his heart, there will be a need for memorizing scripture. Some may argue that it is not necessary, because they have a Bible app on their phone or a Bible at home, but temptation often raises its head against us without giving us time to found our Bible or take out our Bible app.

We may not know Bible verses from God's Word that apply to this issue. We will be caught off guard and unprotected. We will not be prepared when we encounter the truth of 1 Peter 5:8, *"Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."*

We believe that we do not need to internalize God's Word, but we are mistaken. We see it more as a reference book to be checked when needed. Similar to an owner's manual, recipe book, or google, when we need answers to our questions. But God has intended more from the scripture than that.

The Word of God helps us understand everything around us. Struggles, successes, people and things. Suffering and joy. Temptations and triumphs. Good and evil. Truth and lies. Even our own sin and who

we really are in Christ. The Word of God explains to us the true reality of this life that God has created for us and then makes it possible in our lives. Great are the benefits of God's Word.

Hebrews 4:12 tells us that *"the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword . . . discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."* The Word of God has spiritual power to shape us, mold us, refine us, and convict us, as the Father works in our lives to make us like Christ. It is not static writings like a history book or a fiction novel. The Word of God is active in one's life. As we read it, memorize it, meditate upon it, minister it to others, and obey it, we find that it has the power to change us.

Ephesians 6:13-17 describes God's Word as *"the sword of the Spirit"* (v. 17). Just as Jesus used scripture that He already had memorized, to fend off Satan's temptations in the wilderness, so we too must be prepared to fight against the evil one when attacked. We need truth to repel lies.

Psalm 19:7-9 tells us that, *"The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous."*

Listen to what else the scriptures say about what God's Word accomplishes in our lives:

Faith comes from hearing the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17). Through the encouragement of the scriptures we have hope (Rom. 15:4). Those who love God's law will have great peace and will not stumble (Ps. 119:165). We will receive comfort in our affliction, and God's promise gives us life (Ps. 119:50). God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Psalm 119:105). The unfolding of God's words gives light and understanding to the simple (Ps. 119:130). Even when our *"soul melts away with sorrow"* God's Word gives us strength (Ps. 119:28). Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart (Ps. 119:111).

God's Word is the wisdom and love of God, come down for us, so that we know Him well and are empowered to walk in His ways. As we internalize God's Word, it will minister to us and to others as we share God's perspective.

Can you imagine finding out this week that you have lost your job? But instead of being angry, bitter and consumed by worry, the truths of God's Word come to mind. You remember God's instruction in Matthew 6:25, *"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on."* Then you think about God's promise in Matthew 6:33 that says, *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you."* So before you even write up your new CV or look on LinkedIn to find a new job, you have a better idea. You stop by your house, make a lunch, get a blanket, grab your Bible, maybe some peaceful music, and you head down to Retiro Park to spend the afternoon "seeking God first" and gaining a proper perspective of your situation. Afterwards, you are armed with the promise of God's provision and His peace as you begin thinking about your next steps to finding a new job.

Can you imagine, once again being humiliated by your boss? Not being appreciated for your excellent work? But you have been hiding God's Word in your heart, and this time, instead of being angry, bitter and vengeful, your heart responds differently. Your mind is reminded of Colossians 3:23-24, which says, *"Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ."*

What if you are passing through a time of uncertainty or confusion? Can you imagine as you lay in bed, thinking about the situation, that James 1:5 comes to mind, *"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him."* And then Proverbs 3:5-6, *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths."*

What if you go to the doctor and discover that you have life-threatening cancer? Can you imagine, in that moment of shock, that your mind goes to Philippians 4:6-7, *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* Then as that verse begins to sink in, another verse comes to mind, *"All things work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose"* (Romans 8:28).

In the days ahead may we call out to God for a hunger for His Word and may we take the needed steps to study God's Word, memorize God's Word and meditate on God's Word, so that we may be prepared to know God and make Him known. May the word of God dwell in us richly (Colossians 3:16) as we join with the words of Joshua 1:8, *"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."*

Here are additional tools for those who seek to memorize more scripture:

<https://www.navigators.org/resource/topical-memory-system/>

<https://www.navigators.org/resource/how-to-memorize-scripture/>

### Application Questions:

1. Why do you think people don't read the Bible and hide God's Word in their hearts?
2. Can you think of a time that God's Word really helped you in your life?
3. What from this lesson have you found most interesting?
4. What do you think God wants you to do that you have heard about these interesting ideas?