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DEVELOPING A PROGRAM OF SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION  
FOR YOUTH AT EUBANK BAPTIST CHURCH  
IN EUBANK, KENTUCKY

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A Project  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

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by  
Jeremy Lane Johnson  
May 2020

**APPROVAL SHEET**

DEVELOPING A PROGRAM OF SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION  
FOR YOUTH AT EUBANK BAPTIST CHURCH  
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Jeremy Lane Johnson

Read and Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Matthew D. Haste (Faculty Supervisor)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Donald S. Whitney

Date \_\_\_\_\_

To the glory of God

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## PREFACE

The Lord has been good to me. It is a blessing to be able to complete this project. Through it, God has taught me a great deal about being a student, pastor, husband, father, and follower of Jesus. His Word is grace and mercy to me. It brings great joy into my life. I desire that he would use this project to draw others to his Word. I pray this project is pleasing to him, glorifies his Name, and edifies his church.

God has given special people to support and help me in my work. I am thankful for my family, especially my wife Tiffany, who has supported me in every way possible. I thank God for my pastor, Scott Hughes; his encouragement was instrumental in my success. I am thankful for the members of Eubank Baptist Church—for their prayers, care, and participation in this project and my education. I thank God for my faculty supervisor, Dr. Matthew Haste, and the other faculty members at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary who invested in me and this project. Finally, I thank God for faithful brothers in Christ who walked alongside me during this journey.

Jeremy Johnson

Stanford, Kentucky

May 2020

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

To memorize the Bible is to plant one's mind in it. The author of the first Psalm describes a tree planted beside a stream. The stream feeds the tree and nourishes it. Memorizing the Bible is planting oneself beside the stream of God's Word. The Word of God is essential for becoming a follower of Jesus. It teaches a person what he or she needs to be saved and equips one for a faithful life. By committing it to memory, believers plant themselves in God's Words and embed these truths in their minds. Developing an effective program of memorizing Scripture for youth would greatly benefit the church's efforts to disciple young people in the way of Jesus.

#### **Context**

Eubank Baptist Church (EBC) is located in Eubank, Kentucky. Eubank is a small rural town in northern Pulaski County, twenty miles north of Somerset, Kentucky. In December of 1992, EBC moved from its location on Main Street to a more visible location a few miles away on US Highway 27. Since that time the church has grown to be one of the larger churches in its area with 250 to 300 people in attendance each Sunday morning. The church has experienced significant growth in young families with children.

EBC has two full-time staff members who are responsible for leading and pastoring the church. One of those staff members is the senior pastor responsible for overall oversight and shepherding of the church. My position is Associate Pastor of Children and Youth.

EBC emphasizes the importance of reaching youth in its efforts to make disciples. At EBC youth are defined as students who are between sixth grade and twelfth

grade. Within the youth ministry the group is often split into middle schoolers, grades six through eight, and high schoolers, grades nine through twelve. Many recent changes have demonstrated the emphasis on the youth ministry, including renovations of church buildings, worship style, and budget.

There are weekly programs for youth during each regularly scheduled church meeting time. This time is devoted to teaching and discussing biblical stories and writings. On Sunday evenings, the youth focus on cultivating personal spiritual disciplines and ministering to one another. Bible memorization is discussed occasionally, but not on a consistent basis. Wednesday evenings are the largest gathering of the youth at EBC. At this meeting, middle and high school students divide into two groups. The middle schoolers meet with the youth pastor for Bible study while the high schoolers meet with other youth leaders for accountability groups, prayer, and an activity.

The strengths of EBC begin with its people. Their excitement moves them to talk about their church and invite people to come and join EBC. The church has grown in attendance because others want to be with them. Their excitement and love for their church are infectious. Much of this growth has been in young families with children. This has led to growth in the youth ministry. EBC also serves its community. The church is the site of a monthly food ministry that provides food to 200 to 300 families; other strong ministries include the single mother oil change, the back-to-school bash which provides school supplies to children who need them, and regular benevolence ministries. Individual members are also committed to serving those in need around them in their everyday life. The youth play a strong role in each of these ministries. The children and youth ministries are also strengths of the church. These ministries are well funded and the church emphasizes them over many other things. Both ministries are strong in numbers and student enthusiasm. Students want to come, and they want to invite others.

There are also weaknesses in the youth ministry at EBC that must be brought to light, in order to build them up into strengths. One of these weaknesses is biblical

literacy. While students at EBC are growing, they lack knowledge of biblical texts. This is due to a deficiency of personal spiritual disciplines, such as Bible memorization. Their practice of personal spiritual disciplines is poor. Although some growth has occurred in both daily Bible reading and daily prayer, students confess to not spending time in personal spiritual disciplines. Parents are not taking responsibility for the discipleship of their children. They will bring their children to the church to be discipled, but many of them will not intentionally disciple their children at home. They do not know that they should be discipling their children and do not know how to do so. Parents are not engaged in Bible memorization and do not know its importance.

To make disciples of youth, EBC has identified four important principles to concentrate their efforts. The first is to focus on the gospel of Jesus. The second is to equip parents to disciple their children. The third is teaching the biblical story. This goal includes teaching individual stories and helping the students to see where the story fits into the bigger picture. The fourth is to cultivate personal spiritual disciplines. Bible memorization is instrumental in all four of these concentrations and would be a direct fulfillment of the fourth. EBC is seeking to make disciples of their youth. Bible memorization would make a positive impact on each of these concentrations.

EBC has not purposefully taught Bible memorization as a discipline. They have not communicated the vital place of this discipline in the believer's life. The church has neglected a tool for spiritual growth towards godliness by disregarding Bible memorization.

### **Rationale**

Scripture memory is an indispensable aspect of biblical growth. In Deuteronomy 6:6-7, God tells his people that they are to internalize the commands that he gave them, and then they are to teach them to their children. Throughout Israel's history, many of their troubles can be directly linked to their failure to obey God's Words

in Deuteronomy 6. Judges 2:10-12 teaches that later generations did not know about God's relationship with Israel. These later Israelites turned away from God and served false gods. All of this happened because the new generation did not know what God had done for the people. They did not know these things because Israel had not impressed these truths on them as children. This truth is still true for the churches of the New Covenant. Christian parents must impress God's Word on their children, or they will not know the Lord nor what he has done for them. Bible memorization is a vital discipline for accomplishing this task. In Isaiah 55:11, God promised that his Word will not return empty. It will accomplish the purpose that he has given it. By memorizing God's Word, the youth of EBC will gain knowledge of his Word and receive the blessings God has promised through it.

To address this, EBC implemented a multi-week program engaging students, parents, and church leaders. The program taught the importance of Bible memorization and showed students why they should memorize Scripture. It also taught them how to memorize Scripture. During the program, students practiced Bible memorization. They used methods taught to memorize passages of Scripture along with their reference and practiced recalling them. Parents were encouraged to be a part of their child's practice of memorizing Scripture, since they are the primary people responsible for the discipleship of their children. The program asked parents to encourage Bible memorization and to participate in the practice alongside their children. However, EBC was not able to be completely reliant on parents, because many students in any church youth ministry do not have parents at home engaged in their discipleship. For those students, the plan needed to provide the teaching, encouragement, and modeling necessary for them to be successful.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to train the youth of EBC to memorize Scripture by completing a 12-week curriculum, emphasizing the value of the practice,

methods to successfully memorize Scripture, and giving them opportunity to practice intentional memorization of Philippians 1.

### **Goals**

Four goals needed to be met to complete the project. Each of these goals guided the progress of the project. The first goal determined the starting point in regards to Bible memorization. Setting a benchmark enabled me to know if progress occurred. The remaining goals marked success in advancing the practice of Bible memorization.

1. The first goal was to assess the current level and practice of Bible memorization among youth at EBC.
2. The second goal was to develop a Scripture memory curriculum for the EBC youth.
3. The third goal was to train EBC youth to memorize Scripture and to value this discipline.
4. The fourth goal was to improve the Scripture memory plan and develop a priorities list for further implementation.

Each of these goals required a means to measure progress and benchmarks to measure success. The next section outlines each of the means of measurement and benchmarks of success. Each goal guided the advancement of the project and helped gauge success.

### **Research Methodology**

The first goal was to assess the starting level and practice of Bible memorization in the youth at EBC. A pre-survey was administered to determine current practices of Bible memorization.<sup>1</sup> The survey included 15 questions and was administered on paper at the introductory event before the curriculum began. The students created a 6-digit pin using their birthdate to identify their survey pair. When

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 1. All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

each of the students completed the survey, the goal was considered achieved.

The second goal was to develop a Scripture memory curriculum for youth at EBC. The Scripture memory plan included a 12-week curriculum with the objective of memorizing Philippians 1. This curriculum started at an event on a Sunday afternoon beginning directly after the morning worship service and ending at 7 p.m. At this event, I introduced Philippians 1, the importance of Scripture memorization, and methods for memorizing Scripture. The method that I taught is modeled in Andrew Davis' book *An Approach to the Extended Memorization of Scripture*.<sup>2</sup> The students were instructed to set aside between 15 and 30 minutes each day. The method consisted of three sections. First, the youth would recite the last verse memorized. Second, they would learn the new verse. Then, they would recite all verses memorized up to that point together. I also taught various mnemonic devices—such as flash cards, drawing, written memorization, the “loci” method, and the “peg” system—and demonstrated how they could be used within this method. The curriculum then continued during the Wednesday night youth meetings for twelve consecutive weeks. To begin each session, the leader would pray through a section of Philippians 1. Next, one benefit of Scripture memorization was highlighted. Students were then paired with a partner and recited their progress for 15 minutes. Their partner listened and corrected any mistakes. The goal was precision to the New American Standard Bible. The remainder of each week consisted of a series of Bible studies taught on the book of Philippians. An expert panel consisting of two parents, two youth ministers from other churches, and a lead pastor from another church evaluated the Scripture memory curriculum.<sup>3</sup> The panel graded the curriculum according to a rubric grading six different elements.<sup>4</sup> This goal was considered achieved when the curriculum

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<sup>2</sup> See Andrew M. Davis, *An Extended Approach to the Memorization of Scripture* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador International, 2014), Kindle.

<sup>3</sup> See appendix 2.

<sup>4</sup> The options on the scale were insufficient, requires attention, satisfactory, and excellent. See

met satisfactory in 90 percent of the evaluation criteria. If the curriculum did not reach satisfactory, it would need to be revised until the goal was achieved.

The third goal was to train youth at EBC to memorize Scripture and to value this discipline. A post-survey was administered on the twelfth Wednesday night after the completion of the curriculum.<sup>5</sup> Students who met the qualification to be considered in the results of the project were given 72 hours to return the survey. The post-survey included all questions from the pre-survey with the addition of one to ascertain their progress in memorizing Philippians 1. It was administered on paper. As previously stated, each student created a 6-digit pin using his or her birthdate to identify the survey pairs. Only those students who attended the opening retreat and eight of the twelve weekly sessions were considered for research purposes. The goal was achieved if the results of the assessment showed a considerable increase in valuing and practice of Scripture memorization.

The fourth goal was to improve the Scripture memory plan and develop a priorities list for further implementation. At completion of the curriculum, the students completed an evaluation of the curriculum to determine clarity of teaching.<sup>6</sup> This evaluation would then be utilized in making a priorities list to improve the Scripture memory curriculum. The evaluation included six questions and was administered on paper following the post-curriculum survey. It was completed only by students who attended the opening retreat and eight of the twelve weekly sessions. This goal was measured by the completion of a priorities list for improving the Scripture memory plan for future implementation.

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appendix 2.

<sup>5</sup> See appendix 3.

<sup>6</sup> See appendix 4.

## **Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations**

The following definitions are key terms that will be used in the ministry project:

*Personal spiritual disciplines.* Personal spiritual disciplines are practices focused on God and revealed in his Word to draw believers near to God. Donald Whitney writes, “The Spiritual Disciplines are those practices found in Scripture that promote spiritual growth among believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are the habits of devotion and experiential Christianity that have been practiced by the people of God since biblical times.”<sup>7</sup>

*Bible memorization.* Successfully memorizing a passage is defined as recalling the general sense of the passage. It is the ability to recite or handwrite a portion of Scripture, including the reference, which the student had not previously committed to memory. The only accepted errors are in minor words that do not affect the meaning of the passage.

One limitation applied to this project. The effectiveness of the program was limited by the attendance of students. If students did not attend church times when the program was active, its effectiveness would be difficult to gauge.

Two delimitations applied to this project. First, it focused only on youth involved in regularly scheduled youth ministries at EBC. Second, the Scripture memory curriculum was confined to an initial 7-hour event, followed by 12 weeks of the regularly scheduled Wednesday evening youth meeting.

## **Conclusion**

EBC has not faithfully taught or encouraged its students in the discipline of memorizing Scripture. Bible memorization is a vital practice for knowing the commands

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<sup>7</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, rev. ed. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014), 4.

of God and what he has done for his people. The purpose of this project was to teach the youth of EBC to memorize Scripture. Chapter 2 discusses the biblical foundation for the practice of Scripture memorization, and chapter 3 explores historical and theoretical issues relating to it. Chapter 4 outlines the project, while chapter 5 provides reflection on and summary of the project.

CHAPTER 2  
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR  
BIBLE MEMORIZATION AS A VITAL  
SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

Bible memorization is a vital spiritual discipline. Job 23:12 states, “I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.”<sup>1</sup> The Word of God is necessary to one’s spiritual life. Memorizing his Word ensures that it nourishes the believer. In this chapter, five passages of Scripture, representing both Old and New Testament texts, show how Bible memorization is beneficial to progress in the spiritual life. Each passage demonstrates a unique way in which the practice benefits the spiritual life. The passages are presented in the order they are found in the Bible. Bible memorization benefits the Christian life by granting wisdom, promoting faithfulness, combating temptation, contributing to fruitful prayer, and undergirding obedience and blessing.

**Proverbs 2:1-5**

An exegesis of Proverbs 2:1-5 demonstrates that Scripture memorization is instrumental in gaining wisdom. The author of Proverbs begins his writing by imploring the reader to heed his teachings. The reader is informed that failure to do so will result in calamity. Proverbs 2 begins with a description of what it means to heed the teachings. Bible memorization is displayed in verse 1: “Treasure my commandments within you.” These words begin a conditional sentence concerning the pursuit of wisdom. They culminate in verse 5, with “discerning the fear of the Lord,” and “discovering the

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture references are from the New American Standard Bible.

knowledge of God.” These two phrases are descriptors of Godly wisdom. Scripture memorization is a condition that when met will be instrumental in gaining wisdom.

Proverbs 2:1-5 is a conditional sentence. If the conditions are met the stated outcome will be true. According to William McKane, the protasis (the “if” statement) is found in verses 1 through 4 and the apodosis (the “then” statement) is in verse 5.<sup>2</sup> Michael Fox understands the conditional statements as a promise, stating, “The gist of the lecture is not ‘seek wisdom!’ but rather ‘If you seek wisdom you will find it.’ The threefold conditional of vv.1-4 (which replaces the expected imperatives) conveys the earnestness of the assurance.”<sup>3</sup> Likewise, Roland Murphy summarizes verses 1-4 in this way: “The teacher promises wisdom as a gift of the Lord, if the ‘son’ truly follows the bidding to seek wisdom above all else, beyond any riches.”<sup>4</sup>

While not having the form of a command, the passage speaks with the force of one. Bruce Waltke argues that even though the author did not write these statements in the form of imperatives they still function as commands.<sup>5</sup> Whether this passage is to be read as a command, as a promise, or as a general statement about the reality of seeking wisdom, the truth of the statement remains. If the protasis is fulfilled, the apodosis will be true. The writer intended to motivate the reader to pursue wisdom by giving knowledge concerning the pursuit of wisdom.

The pursuit of wisdom demands effort. Two increasing principles of literary progression guide each statement in the conditional sentence. First, each statement about

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<sup>2</sup> William McKane, *Proverbs: A New Approach*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 278.

<sup>3</sup> Michael V. Fox, “The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 113, no. 2 (1994): 243.

<sup>4</sup> Roland E. Murphy, *Proverbs*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1998), 15.

<sup>5</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 220.

how to pursue wisdom progresses in intensity. Also, Proverbs 2 is a chiastic progression where each section begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. There are 22 sections—one for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Waltke asserts that both of these progressions, the chiastic progression and the progression of intensity, show that the pursuit of wisdom requires a great deal of exertion and determination.<sup>6</sup> This progression culminates when verse 5 reveals what will happen if someone meets the conditions in verses 1 through 4. It reads, “Then you will discern the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God.” If one fervently pursues knowledge, beginning with storing up the Words of God by memorizing them, then he or she will have godly wisdom, described as the “knowledge of God” and the “fear of the Lord.”

Proverbs 2:1-5 begins by addressing the teaching to “my son.” These words are spoken to a person who is in a learning relationship with the writer. Arthur Keefer recognizes the intended audience of the book as the “wise man” (Prov 1:5). When the author addresses “my son” (Prov 2:1), he is addressing the “wise man” of chapter 1. He is wise because of the way he receives teaching. Keefer identifies the intended audience for the book of Proverbs as an ideal student who will take the teachings of the book and rightly apply them. He writes, “The ideal interpreters of Proverbs should approach the book with a posture of ready reception, whereby they hearken to its contents and acquire wisdom, instruction, and hermeneutical faculties.”<sup>7</sup> The author wrote the book to anyone who would rightly approach it, not a specific individual or group of people. The address “my son” is not referring to a biological son, but instead to anyone who would come to these teachings and receive them correctly. Correctly receiving the teachings makes one a “wise man.”

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<sup>6</sup> Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs*, 222.

<sup>7</sup> Arthur Keefer, “A Shift in Perspective: The Intended Audience and a Coherent Reading of Proverbs 1:1-7,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 136, no. 1 (2017): 116.

The first condition to gain the promised wisdom is to accept the words of the teacher. However, the student is not to stop at accepting them and should also store or treasure those words. In his commentary on Proverbs, Steinmann explains that the verb  $\text{יִצְטָר}$  translated “treasure” or “store up” can describe the act of hiding to set an ambush. He then moves to the next word,  $\text{אִתְּךָ}$ . The word means “with you.” It is masculine and singular, referring back to “my son” and is therefore best translated “within you.”<sup>8</sup> The next step after receiving teaching from another is to internalize it as stored knowledge, hiding it inside oneself, before it can become a part of the learner’s character and result in action.

Waltke asserts, “‘Accept’ is escalated to store up (or treasure), which means, with the accusative of thing, to hide or conceal for a definite purpose. That notion entails that one treasures that which he stores. The metaphor signifies to memorize with religious affection Solomon’s ‘sound bites’ in order to have them ready when the occasion demands them.”<sup>9</sup> The correct way to receive the instruction of a teacher is to store them in one’s memory. McKane echoes that understanding of verse 1, explaining that the student must have the ability to recall the teacher’s words because it is not by originality, independent thinking, or argumentation that one learns.<sup>10</sup> The escalation of the conditions throughout verses 1 to 4 show the need for great exertion in the pursuit of wisdom. People cannot stop with simply hearing or even gaining knowledge of the commands. They must put effort into the pursuit to keep the words within themselves. McKane likens the attentive student to one who gathers up and stores the pearls of his teacher. He treasures them with a single-minded focus.<sup>11</sup> The maximal effort in receiving words is to

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<sup>8</sup> Andrew E. Steinmann, *Proverbs*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia, 2009), 89.

<sup>9</sup> Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs*, 220.

<sup>10</sup> McKane, *Proverbs*, 282.

<sup>11</sup> McKane, 282.

store them and put them into one's memory where they have to be recalled, contemplated, and obeyed.

As the reader moves from verse 2 into verse 3, there is a change in the conditional statements given for the apprehension of wisdom. The pursuit increases in intensity, further displaying the type of effort that one needs to gain godly wisdom. Waltke describes the change by pointing out that in verses 1 and 2 the conditions to receive wisdom are passive; in verses 3 and 4 the conditions become aggressive. It is no longer about receiving teaching. Instead, the focus is on the learner as one who goes out and seeks wisdom. Waltke notes that it is no longer a "passive reception" but is now an "aggressive quest."<sup>12</sup> Each of these statements in verses 3-4 speak to the intensity of desire for wisdom. They are about how a person should devote themselves to the teachings of the Scriptures. A person may spend their entire life and sacrifice all their means to seek material treasure. The righteous should pursue the wisdom of God through his Word with that same intensity. This is a picture meant to communicate passion.

In verse 5 the conditional statement reaches its intended result. This is the apodosis of the conditional sentence. If the learner meets these conditions, he or she will receive this reward. The word "then" (אֲזַיֵּן) marks the result of the conditional sentence. "The fear of the Lord" and "the knowledge of God" are the outcomes, if the learner meets the conditions. These two outcomes describe wisdom. Waltke observes, "The reception of wisdom and the quest for it leads to the consequence of knowing God and acquiring the fear of the Lord, the disposition necessary for internalizing the book's content. The logical and temporal particle then binds together the cause (vv. 1-4) and the consequence (vv.5-8)."<sup>13</sup>

At the beginning of the book of Proverbs the author writes, "The fear of the

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<sup>12</sup> Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs*, 221.

<sup>13</sup> Waltke, 222.

Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov 1:7). Murphy concludes that the “fear of the Lord” and the “knowledge of God” are parallel ideas pointing to wisdom. They are a climax of all the terms thus far used for wisdom.<sup>14</sup> In their survey of the Old Testament, Andrew Hill and John Walton connect wisdom with “the fear of the Lord” and “knowledge of God,” stating, “The way of wisdom results in understanding the fear of the Lord and finding the knowledge of God, thus fostering covenant relationship with him (2:5, 17).”<sup>15</sup> Daniel Estes focuses on the fear of the Lord: “The fear of Yahweh represents the desire to please him in all things by respecting the divine order he has constructed in the world.”<sup>16</sup> “The fear of the Lord” and “the knowledge of God” are wisdom. If a person possesses these two things, then he or she has wisdom.

An exegesis of Proverbs 2:1-5 demonstrates that Scripture memorization is instrumental in gaining wisdom. Treasuring the commands within one’s self leads to a knowledge of God and a fear of the Lord. These two phrases are the culmination of wisdom, understanding, and discernment. One way to treasure the commands of Scripture within one’s self is to memorize them. Therefore, Scripture memorization is instrumental in gaining wisdom.

### **Psalm 119:9-16**

An exegesis of Psalm 119:9-16 demonstrates that Scripture memorization promotes faithfulness to God. This section from Psalm 119 answers the question, “How can a young man keep his way pure?” The author answers, “By keeping it according to Your word,” and then details how he has kept his way according to God’s Word in verses

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<sup>14</sup> Murphy, *Proverbs*, 15.

<sup>15</sup> Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 445.

<sup>16</sup> Daniel J. Estes, *Hear, My Son: Teaching and Learning in Proverbs 1-9* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997), 38.

10 through 16. Two of these statements feature the practice of Scripture memorization as part of how a man can keep his way pure. The first is verse 11, which says, “Your word I have treasured in my heart”; the second is verse 16, which says, “I shall not forget your word.”

Each of the 22 sections of Psalm 119 begin with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet as a chiasmic pattern. Psalm 119:9-16 is the second strophe representing the letter *bet*. John Goldingay discusses the psalm as a whole:

Ps. 119 has no structural principle beyond the alphabet—no argument or development. It covers a number of themes but raises them throughout the composition rather than expounding them systematically . . . . It thus looks like a compendium of things one might say to God at different times than a prayer for someone to pray as a whole at the same time with the same immediacy.<sup>17</sup>

Psalm 119 uses eight synonymous terms for the teachings of God. Goldingay points out that all but four of the 176 lines of Psalm 119 include at least one of these words.<sup>18</sup> Verse 16 includes two. It is one of five verses throughout the Psalm to include two.

Psalm 119 focuses on the Word of God, its beauty, and the place that it should play in the life of God’s people. Concerning the nature of the Psalm as a whole, Allen informs, “The psalm is an artistic pattern of recurring motifs used in conjunction with eight synonymous terms for the Torah. It is both a hymn in praise of the Torah and a prayer expressing humanity’s continuous dependence on divine direction and help and so engaging in implicit praise.”<sup>19</sup> Frank-Lothar Hossfeld et al. pinpoint the theme of the *bet* strophe, in the first line of verse 9. “How can a young man keep his way pure?” The author answers, “By keeping it according to Your word.”<sup>20</sup> The *bet* strophe fits into the

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<sup>17</sup> John Goldingay, *Psalms*, vol. 3, *Psalms 90-150*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 377, 380.

<sup>18</sup> Goldingay, *Psalms 90-150*, 378.

<sup>19</sup> Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 21 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 184.

<sup>20</sup> Frank-Lothar Hossfeld et al., *Psalms 3: A Commentary on Psalms 101-150*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 266.

Psalm as a whole by instructing the reader to depend on God's direction as revealed in his Word to keep his way pure.

Allen and Hossfeld both discuss a connection between the first and second strophes of Psalm 119. Allen connects verses 9-16 with the rest of the Psalm when he remarks, "The ethical frustration of v. 5 finds a way out in v 9."<sup>21</sup> He is referring to the authors lament in verse 5: "Oh that my ways may be established to keep Your statutes!" The author is emphatically desiring to live according to God's Word in verse 5. In verse 9 he brings up the question of how a person can do that very thing. The rest of the strophe, beginning with the second half of verse 9, is an answer to that question. The answer to the lament of verse 5 and the question of verse 9 highlights Scripture memorization.

When the psalmist asks the question, "How can a young man be pure?" what does he mean by pure? God alone is pure. No man will live in sinless perfection. However, the psalmist does call the learner to pursue purity. Capability does not diminish the call to purity. Goldingay suggests that the question is, "How can we find our way into purity of life?"<sup>22</sup> The author asks the question with the pursuit of purity in mind not the obtaining of purity.

Another concern in this question is the phrase *young man*. Charles Briggs doubts the authenticity of the phrase. It would be the only place in this Psalm to directly address a young man. He contends that this makes the reference improbable, saying "the context has no more to do with young men than with other persons."<sup>23</sup> Hossfeld et al., however, find purpose in the phrase stating that the phrase points out the human inclination to sin from the earliest stages of life.<sup>24</sup> For both Hossfeld and Briggs, the

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<sup>21</sup> Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 185.

<sup>22</sup> Goldingay, *Psalms 90-150*, 386.

<sup>23</sup> Charles A. Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1906), 420.

<sup>24</sup> Hossfeld et al., *Psalms 3*, 266.

question is directed towards those who seek to be pure whether old or young. Goldingay breaks down the question, “Like Proverbs (1:4, 22:6, 15), the psalm is concerned (among other things) for the instruction of the young (*na’ar* can cover people from babyhood to near adulthood), people who still need to learn wisdom.”<sup>25</sup>

Verse 10 expresses dependence on God to be able to fulfill the commands of God. He asks God to not allow him to “wander” from the commands of God. It is important that this idea is presented early in the answer because it focuses on dependence on God to living faithfully. Charles Bridges warns, “Attention to the word, however important (ver. 9), can never be practically effective without earnest prayer.”<sup>26</sup> Verse 12 echoes this same idea when it pleads, “Teach me your statutes.” When speaking of this passage Clifford asserts, “The psalmist is acutely conscious that obedience to the word is entirely the gift of God.”<sup>27</sup> In order to keep one’s way according to the Word of the Lord, he must first seek the Lord’s help.

Verse 11 begins a list of actions that the psalmist completes to protect his ways. The first thing the psalmist does is treasure it or store it up in his heart. Tremper Longman III explains that treasuring the Word of God in one’s heart means more than just memorizing. Willem VanGemeran argues, “It extends to holistic living in devotion to the Lord.”<sup>28</sup> Treasuring and depending on God’s Word and work within protects the psalmist from sin and enables him to keep his way pure. Wilcock writes, “Then (v.11) the great defense against temptation to sin is, as God might say to us in the words of

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<sup>25</sup> Goldingay, *Psalms 90-150*, 385.

<sup>26</sup> Charles Bridges, *Psalm 119* (1827; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 20.

<sup>27</sup> Richard J. Clifford, *Psalms 73-150*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 212.

<sup>28</sup> Willem A. VanGemeran, *Psalms*, vol. 5 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 862.

Proverbs, to ‘store up my commands within you.’”<sup>29</sup> One practice that will store up, hide, or treasure the Word of God within a man is to memorize it and to have it to recall at all times. Bridges comments that the man of God should not store up the Word of God for “concealment.”<sup>30</sup> He should store it up “that it may be ready for constant use.”<sup>31</sup> Treasuring the Word of God is not a practice that is an end in itself. The learner practices it in order to affect their lives, to keep them pure, and to promote faithfulness.

Beyond treasuring the Word of God in his heart the psalmist puts forward other spiritual disciplines in order to keep his way pure and faithful. In addition to treasuring the Word of God he also presses the idea of rejoicing in or delighting in God’s Word, declaring or speaking the Word to others, and meditating on the Word. When something is important enough to call it a treasure and to store it, it is loved. It brings happiness to the one who keeps it. The psalmist expresses this idea two more times throughout this strophe. In verse 14 he says, “I have rejoiced in the ways of your testimonies.” In verse 16, he says, “I shall delight in your Statutes.”<sup>32</sup> When speaking of treasuring the Word of God within the heart Briggs explains that in the same way that treasuring the word keeps a man living in a faithful way, speaking the Word of God to others impresses them on the mind of the one who is speaking.<sup>33</sup> Loving God’s Word, speaking God’s Word, and living it in faithfulness are all promoted by memorizing the Word and storing it in mind. Goldingay proposes, “The psalmist has stored up YHWH’s statement because that is how to make sure of not failing or falling short of YHWH’s expectations.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Psalms 73-150: Songs for the People of God*, Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 195.

<sup>30</sup> Bridges, *Psalms 119*, 22.

<sup>31</sup> Bridges, 22.

<sup>32</sup> VanGemeren, *Psalms*, 862.

<sup>33</sup> Briggs and Briggs, *Commentary on Psalms*, 420.

<sup>34</sup> Goldingay, *Psalms 90-150*, 386.

In the final phrase of the strophe, the psalmist reiterates the importance of storing God's Words within. He reminds the reader that forgetting or ignoring the Word is something that he must guard against. Hossfeld warns that to forget the Lord's Words would be to forget the Lord himself.<sup>35</sup> Forgetting God and his teachings would leave the believer with only his own thoughts and the way of the world. The absence of God's teachings in the mind would certainly lead to error. One way to guard against this error is to commit the words of God to memory.

An exegesis of Psalm 119:9-16 demonstrates that Scripture memorization promotes faithfulness to God. This passage answers the question, "How can a young man keep his way pure?" The primary answer is, "By keeping it according to your word." As he expounds on this answer in verses 10-16, he teaches the man of God to treasure the Word of God within himself. Treasuring the Word within one's self is memorizing Scripture and having it available to recall, meditate on, and rejoice in. Such is the path of faithfulness.

### **Matthew 4:1-11**

An exegesis of Matthew 4:1-11 demonstrates that Scripture memorization combats temptation. In this passage, Satan tests Jesus' faithfulness to the Father. Three times in three different settings Satan tempts Jesus. Each time, Jesus counters Satan with direct quotations of Scripture from memory. Jesus demonstrates that memorized Scripture combats temptation.

Following his baptism, the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness. R. T. France prefers to label the story as a testing rather than a tempting. He writes that the "whole experience takes place under the guidance of the Spirit and therefore according to the purpose of God."<sup>36</sup> He points out that Matthew's Gospel often uses *πειραζο* to mean

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<sup>35</sup> Hossfeld et al., *Psalms 3*, 267.

<sup>36</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Commentary on the New

“test.” “Its other uses in Matthew are of human subjects who come to Jesus with hard questions hoping to trap him or expose him (16:1; 19:3; 22:18; 35),” France argues.<sup>37</sup> Perspective determines the question of temptation or testing. Testing hopes for success, while temptation desires failure. It is true to say that God is testing his son. It is also true that Satan is tempting Jesus. The Spirit of God who led Jesus to the wilderness initiated the encounter with Satan. Therefore, it is best described as a testing.

This narrative takes place directly following Jesus’ baptism in which God declares Jesus to be his Son and the Holy Spirit descends on him. He goes to the wilderness in order to prove that the statement is true. He is the Son of God and the Spirit is on him. Hagner explains, “As the Son of God, Jesus proves to be triumphant in the testing, which in turn confirms his endowment with the Spirit as the obedient Son of God.”<sup>38</sup> He adds, “The testing then amounts to this: shall Jesus exercise his messianic power for his own ends in a way that avoids difficulty and pain, or shall he accept the path of suffering (and death) that is his Father’s will.”<sup>39</sup> Carson suggests, “It was a temptation to use his sonship in a way inconsistent with his God-ordained mission.”<sup>40</sup> The testing of Jesus in the wilderness was to prove that Jesus was the obedient son of God that he was said to be in the baptism narrative.

Satan is the tempting nemesis in the story. He is the same tempter who afflicts those who belong to Jesus today. Craig Evans shows that neither “Satan” nor “Devil” are a personal name in the way that they are often used. The word “devil” means “one who

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Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 126.

<sup>37</sup> France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 126.

<sup>38</sup> Donald Alfred Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33A (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 64.

<sup>39</sup> Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 65.

<sup>40</sup> D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 9 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 141.

“slanders,” “accuses,” or “speaks against.” Verses 1, 5, 8, and 11 contain this name. “Satan” means “one who opposes.” Verse 10 includes this word.<sup>41</sup> In verse 3, Matthew identifies him by his function in this story, “the tempter.” All these identifiers for the Evil One speak of the roles that he fulfills.

The temptation narrative parallels the testing of Israel in the wilderness under the leadership of Moses. The difference between the two stories is that where Israel failed, Jesus overcomes. Jesus will be the true son of God that Israel failed to be. Carson writes, “In Jesus’ ‘temptations’ God clearly purposed to test him just as Israel was tested, and Jesus’ responses prove that he understood. Each of the temptations is replete with allusions to Old Testament events and to a variety of themes within Matthew.”<sup>42</sup> The beginning of this story parallels with Israel in both the setting and in what Jesus is doing before Satan arrives. Jesus is in the wilderness just as Israel wandered in the wilderness. Forty days and nights is parallel to the forty years Israel wandered. While Israel did not fast, they did complain to God concerning their hunger.<sup>43</sup> In each of the three temptations that Satan speaks, Jesus answers with memorized quotations from Deuteronomy 6-8. The teachings of these texts take place during the time of Israel’s wandering in the wilderness.

Satan bases the first temptation on Jesus’ being the Son of God. John Nolland maintains that the “if” in verse 3 is not expressing doubt, instead, it communicates that Satan is basing what he is about to say on the fact that Jesus is the Son of God.<sup>44</sup> William Hendriksen sees Satan’s words in the first temptation pointing back to the words of the

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<sup>41</sup> Craig A. Evans, *Matthew*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 82.

<sup>42</sup> Carson, *Matthew*, 141.

<sup>43</sup> John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 163.

<sup>44</sup> Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 163.

Father at the baptism of Jesus. He prefers the word “since” instead of “if.”<sup>45</sup> Craig Blomberg articulates that neither Jesus nor Satan doubt the fact that Jesus is the Son of God in this story. Blomberg clarifies, “Rather what is in doubt is what type of son Jesus will be.”<sup>46</sup>

Jesus is hungry because he has been fasting. Satan targets this opportunity in tempting Jesus to create food for himself from stones. Hagner clarifies, “The testing then amounts to this: shall Jesus exercise his messianic power for his own ends in a way that avoids difficulty and pain, or shall he accept the path of suffering (and death) that is his Father’s will.”<sup>47</sup> Jesus responds by quoting Deuteronomy 8:3. Jesus’ answer to Satan’s temptation redirects the focus from the physical need of hunger to the power of the Word of God to sustain his people. Hendriksen describes Jesus’ point by saying that Satan is speaking from a “false assumption” that people need bread. Instead, Jesus is saying that man only needs the power of God to live well.<sup>48</sup> Jesus’ quotation is a word-for-word quotation of the Septuagint.<sup>49</sup> Jesus quotes Scripture from memory to combat the temptation of Satan.

The narrative of the second temptation raises two issues. The first is that the Gospel of Luke disagrees with Matthew in the order of the second and third temptations. Luke switches them, opposite from the order Matthew has them. France states that the majority of commentators favor Matthew’s order as being completed chronologically.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973), 225-26.

<sup>46</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 84.

<sup>47</sup> Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 65.

<sup>48</sup> Hendriksen, *Gospel According to Matthew*, 227.

<sup>49</sup> Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 164.

<sup>50</sup> France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 126.

His order brings the two “Son of God” temptations together as the first and second. Matthew also follows an order according to the height of the setting. He begins in the wilderness, proceeds to the roof of the temple, and finishes on a high mountain.

The second issue brought up by the second temptation is the change of location. Both the second and third temptations include a new location. The second temptation takes place on the roof of the temple and the third on a high mountain. There is debate whether Satan and Jesus physically transport, or Satan initiated an ecstatic vision. France answers this question by focusing on the third temptation: “no actual mountain could provide a view of ‘all the kingdoms of the world’ at once suggests that this transportation was not physical but visionary.”<sup>51</sup>

Morris summarizes the problem in the second temptation by saying that it attempts to manipulate God by requiring him to act.<sup>52</sup> Instead of being obedient to the will of the Father the temptation would put Jesus in the place of forcing action on the part of the Father. France concurs, saying that Satan’s temptation tests God’s promise of protection and creates a situation where God is obliged to act.<sup>53</sup> Satan tempts Jesus to throw himself off of the temple knowing that God would send angels to save him. With this temptation, Satan attempts to build his case upon a quotation from Scripture. He quotes a portion of Psalm 91:11-12 omitting only the phrase, “To guard you in all your ways,” from the end of verse 11.

Once again Jesus combats Satan’s temptation with a direct quotation of Scripture. He quotes Deuteronomy 6:16 with another word-for-word quotation from the Septuagint.<sup>54</sup> The quotation is originally directed to the Israelites as a rebuke for putting

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<sup>51</sup> France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 131.

<sup>52</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 76.

<sup>53</sup> France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 133.

<sup>54</sup> Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 67.

God to the test by demanding water in Exodus 17:1-7. Nolland elaborates, “It is not the people’s place to dictate how he is to express his covenant commitment to his people.”<sup>55</sup> Where the Israelites failed to have faith in God and patience in his plan, Jesus was obedient. He trusts God’s plan for him and does not attempt to force God’s hand.

For the third temptation, Satan changes the setting to a high mountain. Here Satan attacks the first commandment and is, as Carson describes, “depriving God of his exclusive claim to worship.”<sup>56</sup> The temptation is to instantly gain the power and authority over all the world that he will have after his death and resurrection. The temptation is not a matter of if he will have all power and authority, it is a matter of when he will receive it. Hendriksen argues that while Satan does wield considerable authority over the earth and the nations, he does not own them in a way in which he could give them to Jesus. This temptation has to do with forgoing the plan of God to save the world. He says that Satan offered Jesus all power and authority without the suffering of the cross.<sup>57</sup>

In response to the final temptation, Jesus uses the strongest rebuke found in the temptation narrative. Before answering Satan with another Scripture quotation from the book of Deuteronomy, he exclaims, “Go, Satan.” This indicates that this temptation is the climactic one and will be the end of the encounter. Jesus then quotes Deuteronomy 6:13. Hagner points out two differences between Jesus’ words and the Septuagint. The first alteration is *προσκυνήσεις*, which can be rendered “you shall worship,” in the place of the Septuagint’s wording *φοβηθήση*, “you shall fear.” Hagner postulates that this alteration may have been made to answer Satan’s phrasing of the temptation which speaks of “worship” in verse 9. The other difference is that *μόνῳ*, “only,” is placed before

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<sup>55</sup> Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 166.

<sup>56</sup> Carson, *Matthew*, 143.

<sup>57</sup> Hendriksen, *Gospel According to Matthew*, 133-34.

λατρεύσεις, “you shall serve.”<sup>58</sup> France believes that this alteration was made to bring in the idea of what immediately follows the quotation in Deuteronomy 6:14.<sup>59</sup> Verse 14 emphasizes the command to follow no other gods. For a third and final time, Jesus has resisted temptation utilizing Scripture that he recalled from memory.

At the conclusion of the temptation, Satan withdrew, and angels came to minister to Jesus. Satan withdrew for a time, but Satan’s work and temptation did not end there in the life of Jesus. Matthew 16:22-23 and 26:36-46 are later times in Jesus’ ministry when temptation took place.<sup>60</sup> In Luke’s Gospel the story ends with Luke 4:13: “When the devil had finished every temptation, he left him until an opportune time.” Following Satan’s withdrawal angels came and ministered to Jesus. Hagner comments that the appearance of the angels is about ministering to Jesus’ needs, but it is primarily about affirming Jesus’ obedience and victory over temptation.<sup>61</sup> The ending of the temptation narrative presents Jesus as victorious and shows that Satan’s work of tempting is ongoing.

An exegesis of Matthew 4:1-11 demonstrates that Scripture memorization combats temptation. In answer to three separate temptations leveled against him by Satan Jesus quotes Scripture from memory. Morris makes the point that in each of the temptations Jesus overcomes with resources that are available to each of his followers.<sup>62</sup> He knows the Word of God by memory, believes its truth, and obeys its teachings in order to combat Satan’s temptations.

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<sup>58</sup> Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 69.

<sup>59</sup> France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 135.

<sup>60</sup> Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 168.

<sup>61</sup> Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 69.

<sup>62</sup> Morris, *Gospel According to Matthew*, 74.

### **John 15:7**

An exegesis of John 15:7 demonstrates that Scripture memorization results in fruitful prayer. Jesus teaches his disciples that his words abiding in them is significant to their abiding in him. Jesus introduces a conditional sentence in which the conditions are the disciple abiding in him and his words abiding in them. The outcome is fruitful and effective prayer. When his words are continually in the disciple his prayers will be according to the will and ways of God. They will be pleasing to God. Through Scripture memorization, the teachings of Jesus can be consistently in the mind of the disciple and benefit his or her prayer life.

In this section from the Gospel of John, Jesus uses the images of a vine, bearing fruit, and a vinedresser to make his point. Jesus focuses on the word “abide,” and uses the vine imagery to illustrate his usage of that word. Craig Keener looks back to the way the disciples lived with Jesus and stayed with him during his ministry to illustrate what believers now do in the Spirit. Keener concludes that two points of this image are dependence and an organic union. In the same way that growing fruit is dependent on the vine, the disciple is also dependent on abiding in Jesus. The use of the present tense in verse 5 and 6 teaches continual dependence. The organic union is one that grows. The more the teachings of Jesus and the Spirit abide in the disciple the more that they will grow to love him and desire to remain in him.<sup>63</sup>

Jesus proclaims, “I am the true vine.” Disciples who stay connected to Jesus will bear fruit, as a shoot from a vine will if it stays connected to the nourishment of the main vine. Those who do not stay connected to Jesus, the vinedresser cuts away; they wither and die. The vinedresser cuts on both the fruitful and unfruitful branches, but for different purposes. The fruitful branch he prunes to increase its yield of fruit, while the unfruitful branch he cuts away and destroys. This passage is the last of seven “I am”

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<sup>63</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 999-1000.

statements presented by John in his Gospel. Jesus claimed to be the bread of life (John 6:35-48), the light of the world (John 8:12), the gate (John 10:7), the good shepherd (John 10:11-14), the resurrection and the life (John 11:25), the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6), and finally, the true vine in this passage. These statements are unique to John and not found in the synoptic Gospels. As to their purpose in the Gospel, John Hutchinson writes, “The metaphors completing the ‘I am’ statements arise from a rich tradition of Old Testament and Jewish cultural history, and each of them in some way contributes to Jesus’ messianic claims.”<sup>64</sup> Jesus’ claim to be the “true vine” is a claim to be the connection to God that people need to live faithfully.

The Old Testament describes Israel as a vine. Hutchinson claims that the article before the predicate noun highlights the noun as something already known to the reader. Jesus is not introducing new imagery but is claiming to be the vine the readers already know.<sup>65</sup> Psalm 80:8-16, Hosea 10:1-2, and Jeremiah 2:21 are all examples of this symbolism. Carson points out that one common theme in the passages relating Israel to a vine is Israel’s failure to bear the fruit God desired. He says, “In contrast to such failure, Jesus claims, ‘I am the true vine’, i.e. the one to whom Israel pointed, the one that brings forth good fruit.”<sup>66</sup> In the past, it had been Israel who was the vine, however, now that life-giving vine is Jesus and individual Israelites are cut off for rejecting him.<sup>67</sup>

Verse 7 ties together the disciple abiding in Jesus and his words abiding in them. Raymond Brown contends that Jesus and his teachings are “interchangeable.”<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> John C. Hutchinson, “The Vine in John 15 and Old Testament Imagery in the ‘I Am’ Statements,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 168, no. 669 (January-March 2011): 72.

<sup>65</sup> Hutchinson, “The Vine in John 15,” 66.

<sup>66</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 513.

<sup>67</sup> Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1002.

<sup>68</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, Anchor Bible Commentary (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 662.

When the words of Jesus remain in the disciple it is Jesus remaining in the disciple. The teachings of Jesus are inseparable from Jesus himself. Therefore, when Jesus speaks of the results of abiding in him, the disciple must also attribute those results to his words abiding in them. When the disciple does these two things it “will produce a situation in which whatever they ask will be done for them,” clarifies Francis Moloney.<sup>69</sup> Hendriksen sees Jesus’ words abiding in the believer as an explanation of what it means for the believer to abide in Jesus. He concludes, “We learn that it means to heed the utterances of Christ, so that they become the dynamic of one’s life, taking complete control over a person, so that he both believes them and acts in accordance with them.”<sup>70</sup>

The context surrounding verse 7 reveals that when Jesus’ words abide in the disciple, fruitful prayer is the fruit. It is a conditional statement. If you do these two things, then whatever you ask will come to be. Edward Klink explains the relation between the abiding of Jesus and his words to God’s promise to answer prayer by saying that it is not a “blank-check.”<sup>71</sup> Instead, when Jesus’ teaching, his person, and his works have become a part of who a man is and are guiding him, his prayers will be in line with the “life and mission of God.” He emphasizes that Jesus is the “primary cause” of the believer’s prayers.<sup>72</sup> Hendriksen argues that when Jesus is in the disciples and his words are dwelling in them they will “ask nothing that is contrary to Christ’s will.”<sup>73</sup> This is because they are now “in complete harmony with all that Christ has revealed.”<sup>74</sup> Carson

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<sup>69</sup> Francis J. Moloney and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of John*, Sacra Pagina 4 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 421.

<sup>70</sup> William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 302.

<sup>71</sup> Edward W. Klink III, *John*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 654.

<sup>72</sup> Klink, *John*, 654.

<sup>73</sup> Hendriksen, *Gospel According to John*, 302.

<sup>74</sup> Hendriksen, *Gospel According to John*, 302.

clarifies the statement saying, “Such a truly obedient believer proves effective in prayer, since all he or she asks for conforms to the will of God.”<sup>75</sup> Often people misconstrue this passage to confine God to the will of the person who is praying. However, Jesus is teaching that if a believer is submissive to the Word of God, his or her prayers will be in line with the character and will of God, making the believer’s prayers acceptable to God.

Jesus promises to answer the prayers of the faithful. John has already included this teaching of Jesus’ in 14:13-14 and referenced it in 15:16 and 16:23 as well. In 15:7 Jesus gives two conditions for this promise that will help the reader better understand the teaching. Hendriksen discusses the differences in how each of these passages speak of answered prayers. Jesus, in John 15:7 says, “It will take place for you,” while in 14:13 he says, “I will do it,” and in both 15:16 and 16:23 it says of God the Father, “He will give it.”<sup>76</sup> Each of these texts emphasize both the disciple’s connection to Jesus in their prayers being answered and the glory of God in the answered prayers. In John 14 it is obedience to his commands and continuing the work of Jesus that is the context for the promise to answer prayer. In chapter 16, it is asking in the name of Jesus that is the condition for answered prayer. In chapter 15 both passages connect the fruit of faithfulness to Jesus and his word to answered prayers. The promise to answer prayer is made to those who are one with Christ, carrying on his work, living for his name and glory, and continually holding his word in themselves.

An exegesis of John 15:7 demonstrates that Scripture memorization results in fruitful prayer. Jesus presents fruitful prayer that God promises to answer as a necessary result of the disciples abiding in him and having his words abiding in them. Scripture memorization will place the words of Jesus before the mind of the believer so that these words are always in them. Without Scripture memorization, the teachings of Jesus are

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<sup>75</sup> Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 518.

<sup>76</sup> Hendriksen, *Gospel According to John*, 302.

only with them when they have written or spoken words near them.

### **James 1:25**

An exegesis of James 1:25 demonstrates that Scripture memorization undergirds obedience and blessing. The text features the person who gives relentless attention to the Word of God. To further define the type of person of which he is speaking, James describes them as “not having become a forgetful hearer.” Scripture memorization ensures that the believer will not forget what they have heard from the Word of God. Verse 25 ends with the statement, “this man will be blessed in what he does.” The man who gives the utmost attention to the Word of God will be blessed in what he does.

To fully understand James’ meaning in verse 25 the reader must begin in verse 22. It is a command to not simply hear the teachings of God, but to put those teachings into practice and obey them. Simon Kistemaker explains that verse 22 is a direct command made up of a positive and a negative part. “Do not merely listen” is the negative part and “do what it says” is the positive part.<sup>77</sup> James’ explanation of this command leads to verse 25. George Guthrie summarizes verse 22 by saying, “God’s word should change behavior, not just stimulate the mind.”<sup>78</sup> If people do not put the Word of God into action they are “deluding” themselves. When a man hears the word and does not do what it says he deceives himself in that he will “miss the opportunity to gain maturity.”<sup>79</sup> The hearers think they are receiving the blessing promised at the end of verse 25; instead, they are missing it because they are not putting the Word of God into action.

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<sup>77</sup> Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle of James and the Epistles of John*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 60.

<sup>78</sup> George H. Guthrie, *James*, in vol. 13 of *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 227.

<sup>79</sup> Daniel M. Doriani, *James*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2007), 51.

James introduces an illustration in verse 23, to make his point concerning a man who is a hearer and not a doer. It compares the hearer to a man who sees what he looks like in a mirror and as soon as he looks away forgets what he looks like. Kistemaker finds a stark similarity in form and meaning in this illustration to the parable of the wise and foolish builder at the end of the sermon on the mount in Matthew 7:24. He summarizes the point by saying the man looks in the mirror and “quickly adjusts his external appearance,” in the same way someone might hear the gospel and “make minor adjustments.”<sup>80</sup> Neither one of these men addressed the real issue, allowing it to persist. Ralph Martin captures the point of the illustration saying, “What is seen in a mirror is meant to lead to action, usually regarded as remedial. The face is seen to be dirty (going back to v 21) or blemished and needing attention. The thoughtless person ‘goes off and forgets’ (gnomic aorists) what he has seen.”<sup>81</sup> Verse 24 provides the explanation of what James is warning against. In the Word of God, the man sees who he should be but then turns away and forgets who he is, living contrary to that image he saw.

Verse 25 is the positive part of what James wants his readers to do. He identifies the “one who looks intently,” “does not forget,” and is an “effectual doer.” Luke Timothy Johnson classifies verse 25 as a conditional sentence when he writes, “The three aorist participles in this clause set up the future tense in the next. In effect, the participles form the protasis of a conditional sentence to which the future responds as apodosis.”<sup>82</sup> If these characteristics are true of a man, then “he will be blessed.”

These characteristics focus on the “perfect law,” specifically the Christian understanding of the law given through Moses. Jesus affects James’ understanding of the

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<sup>80</sup> Kistemaker, *James and the Epistles of John*, 60-61.

<sup>81</sup> Ralph P. Martin, *James*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 48 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988), 50.

<sup>82</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Letter of James*, Anchor Bible Commentary (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 208.

law. When he uses this term, he is speaking of the law as fulfilled by Jesus. Martin insists that “νόμος and λόγος seem to be equal terms.” These words link the “implanted word” of verse 21, the “word” of the illustration in verse 23, and the “perfect law” of verse 25.<sup>83</sup> Douglas Moo also sees the two words as “equivalent.” In discussing why it is that James changes from “word” to “law,” Moo indicates that “a reference to the law of Moses seems certain.”<sup>84</sup> He continues to explain what James means by “law” saying, “in chap. 2, James’ description of the law suggests that he has at least one eye on the ‘fulfillment’ of that law in the teaching of Jesus.”<sup>85</sup> James 1:1 identifies Jewish readers as the intended audience of the letter. He takes a different perspective and identifies the Torah as James’ intended meaning in the words νόμος and λόγος. He contests that there does not seem to be any other places where James identifies the Scripture or Word of God as anything more than the Torah. Allison labels any attempt to read these specifically Christian or New Testament ideas into the book of James as an attempt to unnecessarily harmonize James with other New Testament writings.<sup>86</sup>

It is also described as the “law of liberty.” Through Jesus, the believer is free from the captivity of sin. Blomberg summarizes the issue, saying, “He adds a further modifier, though, which aids in the identification – the descriptive genitive ‘of liberty’ (τῆς ἐλευθερίας)—demonstrating that this law does not trap, bind, or weigh one down but is characterized by freedom. We would argue that this most likely refers to the gospel message.”<sup>87</sup> Martin remarks that this phrase teaches that believers are free from “self-

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<sup>83</sup> Martin, *James*, 51.

<sup>84</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 94.

<sup>85</sup> Moo, *The Letter of James*, 94.

<sup>86</sup> Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of James*, International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 335.

<sup>87</sup> Craig L. Blomberg and Mariam J. Kamell, *James*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary: New

interest.” This frees the disciple up to focus on loving others as he should. Martin points attention to verse 18 where James speaks of the word as the “eschatological fulfillment of Jer 31 in the age of God’s new creation.”<sup>88</sup> The “law” spoken of in verse 25 is synonymous with the “word” used in verses 18, 21, and 23. These terms represent the revealed truth of God with special attention on the law given to Moses. James Hardy Ropes clarifies these phrases by stating, “The use of the phrase by a Christian implies that he conceived Christianity as a law, including and fulfilling the old one.”<sup>89</sup>

James tells the reader to be “one who looks intently into the perfect law.” When speaking of the verb translated *looks intently*, Moo asserts that the basic meaning of the verb is “stoop down.”<sup>90</sup> It denotes the action of bending over to get a closer look at something. He says that John 20:11 includes this same verb in the story of Jesus’ resurrection when Mary “bent over to look into the tomb.”<sup>91</sup> Scot McKnight explains that “looks intently,” is not speaking of reading or studying the Torah. He adds, “Reading was neither the norm for the ancient Jews nor does the context suggest the specifics of Torah Study.”<sup>92</sup> The point here is not the method of intake, instead, it is what the person does with the Word of God. James is putting forward a person who devotes themselves to the Scriptures with such intensity that they act in obedience. When believers receive the Word of God (reading, hearing, or any other method of reception) they can choose to let

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Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 16:91.

<sup>88</sup> Martin, *James*, 51.

<sup>89</sup> James Hardy Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James*, International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1978), 177.

<sup>90</sup> Moo, *The Letter of James*, 93.

<sup>91</sup> Moo, 93.

<sup>92</sup> Scot McKnight, *The Letter of James*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2011), 154.

it pass from themselves and forget it or they can choose to intentionally look at, retain it in their memory, and obey it.

In verse 25, James continues to describe how to handle the Word. The blessed person “abides by it.” Allison reports that one could translate it “continues,” “stays,” or “endures.” He adds that the “theme of endurance” is especially important to James and informs his understanding of the passage.<sup>93</sup> Moo summarizes the meaning of this phrase by saying it points to a person who “having heard the law, sticks to it by internalizing its message and using it to transform one’s life.”<sup>94</sup> Correctly handling the Word of God is not a momentary action. It is not something one does and then stops. It is an action that endures and is carried out continually.

To further explain what he means by “abiding” or “continuing,” he adds, “not having become a forgetful hearer, but an effectual doer.” “Abiding” and “continuing” as James uses them here means to keep the word in mind and to not forget it while doing what it says. Moo states that this phrase “explains the idea of “continuing.”<sup>95</sup> McKnight highlights the terms translated “forget” and “law.”<sup>96</sup> They are together throughout the Old Testament. He points out Deuteronomy 4:23, Deuteronomy 6:12, Deuteronomy 26:13, and Psalm 119:16 as examples of the use of these two terms together.<sup>97</sup> Throughout the Old Testament, an emphasis is put on always having the law in the believer’s mind and actions.

When James utilizes “forget” he is not talking about simply losing the memory of a piece of information. Memory is an essential part in that one cannot do what one

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<sup>93</sup> Allison, *Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 341.

<sup>94</sup> Moo, *The Letter of James*, 95.

<sup>95</sup> Moo, *The Letter of James*, 95.

<sup>96</sup> McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 159.

<sup>97</sup> McKnight, 159.

does not remember. He is speaking about the way that the readers are to live their lives. Forgetting the Word or the law is a matter of hearing what it says and then not carrying it through into action. Allison points out that “James passes by the possibility that one might remember and yet still not do.”<sup>98</sup> The ideas of not forgetting and doing are so tightly connected that one is not possible without the other. The fact that McKnight classifies this phrase as a comment or a further clarification on the idea of “abiding” or “continuing,” informs a proper understanding of the meaning of “forget.”<sup>99</sup> James sees a process of hearing, internalizing, and then acting on the Word of God in obedience.

In this conditional sentence, the result is “this man will be blessed in what he does.” McKnight defines blessing as “God’s favor on a person.”<sup>100</sup> He discusses whether this blessing is a present or a future blessing. It does use the future tense translated “will be blessed.” The future tense gives the idea that the doer will be blessed when Jesus returns and rewards those who belong to him. However, McKnight says, “The reward theme of James involves the present life.”<sup>101</sup> James has shown multiple ways that God’s blessing impacts the life of the faithful through this letter. McKnight lists, “God’s protection and preservation (1:3-4, 12), community fellowship (1:18), moral formation (1:2-4, 5-8), reversal (1:9-11), and the establishment of justice (1:20) and peace (3:18).”<sup>102</sup> For Blomberg, the blessing is purely present and not future. He rightly points out that the blessing comes “in” or “by” doing the Word of God, and affirms, “This is not an eschatological blessing, but the promise of personal fulfillment in the very process of doing what believers know to be right.”<sup>103</sup> In context, being blessed in doing the Word of

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<sup>98</sup> Allison, *Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 342.

<sup>99</sup> McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 153

<sup>100</sup> McKnight, 161.

<sup>101</sup> McKnight, 161.

<sup>102</sup> McKnight, 161.

<sup>103</sup> Blomberg and Kamell, *James*, 93.

God points to the present blessing of an obedient life that walks with God. Being obedient to God's teachings will result in future blessings, but that is not the emphasis in this passage. The faithful will be blessed in doing the Word of God.

An exegesis of James 1:25 demonstrates that Scripture memorization undergirds obedience and blessing. Not forgetting leads to doing the Word of God and therefore being blessed. Scripture memorization is the practice of remembering the Word of God and not forgetting what he has said. This discipline will keep the Word of God in the mind of the believer, which is essential to obey what it has said and to receive the blessing that is promised for faithfulness. One cannot do what he or she does not remember. Without the believer placing the Word of God in one's memory, obedience and, therefore, the blessing is contingent on having someone or something remind him or her of the commands of Scripture and the truths that motivate faithfulness. Scripture memorization supports obedience in blessing.

### **Conclusion**

Bible memorization is a vital spiritual discipline. This discipline is shown by God in Scripture to bear godly fruit in the lives of those who practice it. This chapter presents 5 passages of Scripture to display this truth. Proverbs 2:1-5 proves that Scripture memorization is instrumental in gaining wisdom. Psalm 119:9-16 reveals that it promotes faithfulness to God. In Matthew 4:1-11 Jesus uses memorized Scripture to combat temptation. John 15:7 establishes that it results in fruitful prayer. James 1:25 demonstrates that memorization undergirds obedience and blessing. A practice that benefits godliness in these ways is vital to the life of a believer.

CHAPTER 3  
HISTORICAL AND PRACTICAL SUPPORT FOR  
MEMORIZATION AS AN APPLICABLE  
FORM OF EDUCATION

The previous chapter demonstrated that Bible memorization is a vital spiritual discipline. Five passages from throughout the Bible linked Bible memorization to spiritual growth, demonstrating that the practice is profitable to the believer's ability to follow Jesus. This chapter utilizes extrabiblical material to argue that memorization is an applicable form of education that helps people—especially young people—learn, process, and utilize information in real-world situations.

This chapter assesses the value of memorization in three areas. First, it demonstrates that memorization has been practiced to educate believers throughout the history of the Christian church. The use of memorization in four different areas throughout church history proves this statement. Second, neuroscientific research suggests that an individual can improve his or her ability to memorize through the use of mnemonic devices. This section presents various mnemonic devices before demonstrating that these practices develop a person's capability to recall information. Finally, a survey of modern research demonstrates that memorization is a successful form of pedagogical practice.

**Memorization in the Christian Tradition**

Memorization is a longstanding practice in the Christian tradition. Its inclusion in the history of the church does not mean that it is necessarily good, but the previous chapter demonstrated the value of Bible memorization in the life of the believer. On such grounds, Christians have devoted themselves to memorizing many different types of

writing including Scripture, creeds, confessions, catechisms, sermons, songs, and other types of composition throughout the history of the Christian church. Often, believers did not write about the practice; instead, there is evidence of memorization in the writings and the historical documentation of Christian lives. Each of the following sections highlights a different way that memorization has been used throughout the history of the Christian church.

## **Liturgy**

Public worship has been an integral part of the Christian faith since its beginning. While the liturgy of each Christian church may differ, each one has some form of public worship. Scripture commands and models public worship. The Bible gives elements that should exist in the church's liturgy and some instruction for these practices. Memorization has been used to the benefit of the liturgy in the Christian church. Believers have memorized certain parts of the liturgy to benefit the worship and teaching of the church. The repetitive nature of the liturgy in many traditions has also led to the natural memorization of biblical texts and other formulations.

The daily liturgical repetition of monasticism called for and resulted in memorization of biblical texts, especially the Psalms. Benedict of Nursia (480-547) is understood by many to be the most influential figure in the Western monastic movement. *The Rule* is a document written by Benedict that details the practice of the Benedictine order. It prescribed a liturgy of repetitive prayers and Scripture readings during the course of a day. Justo Gonzalez writes, "As a result, most monks came to know the entire Psalter by heart, as well as other portions of the Scripture."<sup>1</sup> The repetitive nature of the monks' daily liturgy led to them memorizing many of the things that they repeated throughout the day. *The Rule* not only sets up a repetitive day that leads to memorization, but it also

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<sup>1</sup> Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, vol. 1, *The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation* (New York: Harper Collins, 1984), 241.

prescribes it. Chapter 8 of *The Rule of St. Benedict* teaches those who have parts of the Psalms left “to learn,” to use the time after night office to study.<sup>2</sup> This makes it clear that Benedict expected the monks to memorize the Psalms. Chapter 10 calls for the reciting of a lesson from the Old Testament by memory.<sup>3</sup> Chapter 13 tells the monks to recite a similar lesson from the apostle by memory.<sup>4</sup> They intentionally memorized biblical texts in order to use them during their daily liturgical routine. In addition, the repetition of readings and prayers during each day led to natural memorization of those texts. Similar repetitive practices also have a place in other monastic orders such as the Franciscans and the Dominicans.

Preaching is a part of Christian liturgy across all traditions. Throughout history, many have committed sermons to memory. William Perkins (1558-1602) was a prominent Puritan leader known for the influence of his preaching and writing. In *The Art of Prophesying*, one of Perkins’ most well-known works, he discusses the use of memory. Perkins urges the preacher to memorize his sermon outline instead of using notes or manuscripts. He also argues that the preacher should not use images and locations as a method of memorization.<sup>5</sup> Perkins rejects these practices because they were a distraction to the speaker and because of the lewdness of the images often used in such methods of memorization. Perkins’ teachings are evidence that Puritan preachers and teachers devoted themselves to memorize the outlines for their sermons. They would recall their points, illustrations, and some biblical texts from memory. While not all Christian preachers have memorized their sermons, many have. In many cases, those who use notes

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<sup>2</sup> Benedict, *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, ed. David Parry (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983), 34.

<sup>3</sup> Benedict, *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, 31.

<sup>4</sup> Benedict, 28.

<sup>5</sup> William Perkins, *The Works of That Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the University of Cambridge, M. William Perkins* (London: John Legatt, 1631), 2:670.

or manuscripts will still recite sections of their sermons from memory.

Christian songs used in the liturgy are also great tools for educating believers. John Wesley (1703-1791) organized the hymnal that he compiled for the Methodist Churches in such a way that it presented biblical truth. He describes its arrangement in his preface: “It is large enough to contain all the important truths of our most holy religion, whether speculative or practical; yea, to illustrate them all, and to prove them both by Scripture and Reason: and this is done in a regular order.”<sup>6</sup> Wesley intended the Methodists to learn and remember the songs in the hymnal so he organized it in a way that would lead to a balanced education.

People remember the words that they sing. The tune and the rhyming lyrics make it easier for people to remember the words of a song. Often the songs that are sung in the liturgy are repetitive. Churches sing the same songs with regularity. Putting these factors together, congregations memorize the words of the songs their churches regularly sing. Modern author Bob Kauflin points out that God uses a song to help his people remember his word in Deuteronomy 31:21.<sup>7</sup> The early church knew their songs by heart. In Acts 16:25, Peter and Silas are singing in prison. It is reasonable to believe that, like the Gregorian chants that would epitomize the church’s liturgy hundreds of years later, they learned these songs worshipping together with the church.<sup>8</sup> Throughout Christian history, believers memorized songs in the liturgy and remembered the truths they present.

Public worship has often been prepared with the expectation that the congregation will learn and even memorize elements of its worship. Memorization has also been utilized in the preparation of those leading the worship of the church. These

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<sup>6</sup> John Wesley, preface to *A collection of Hymns For the Use of the People Called Methodists* (London: John Haddon, 1875).

<sup>7</sup> Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 99.

<sup>8</sup> William Mahrt, “Memory,” *Sacred Music* 141, no. 3 (Fall 2014): 3.

facts show that the church has used memorization throughout its history to teach essential truths to believers via liturgy.

### **Creeds and Catechesis**

Christians created creeds and catechisms throughout the history of the church. Their intention was that believers would memorize them in order to teach them the truths of the Scriptures. They provided a method for the doctrinal and moral truths of the Scriptures to be easily memorized, and they summarized the biblical material, providing a teaching tool that gave believers a foundation without necessitating they read and remember the entire Bible to be faithful. These documents were also used to correct error. They often made statements relating to prevalent heresies of their time. Their existence proves that believers have used memorization as a form of education throughout their history.

The Christian church introduced both catechisms and creeds as forms of education early in its history. Cyril, Archbishop of Jerusalem (313-386), wrote a series catechetical lectures for the training of new believers. A portion of these lectures pertain to the Nicene Creed. In the first lecture focused on the creed, Cyril instructs believers to memorize the creed:

For since all cannot read the Scripture, but some as being unlearned, others by business, are hindered from the knowledge of them; in order that the soul may not perish for lack of instruction, in the Articles which are few we comprehend the whole doctrine of the Faith. This I wish you to remember even in the very phrase, and to rehearse it with all diligence among yourselves, not writing it on paper, but by memory graving it on your heart as on a monument: being watchful, during your exercise, lest haply some of the Catechumens overhear the things delivered to you. This I wish you to keep all through your life as a provision for the way, and besides this to receive no other ever: whether we ourselves should change and contradict what we now teach; or some opposing Angel, transformed into an Angel of light, should aim at leading you astray.<sup>9</sup>

The early church put a high priority on teaching the faith to new believers. Memorizing

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<sup>9</sup> Cyril, *The Catechetical Lectures of S. Cyril, Archbishop of Jerusalem*, trans. John Henry Parker (London: F & J Rivington, 1838), 58.

creeds and catechesis materials were essential for people who were previously unacquainted with the faith and many of whom could not read for themselves. To believe the truths of the faith and to obey its teachings the new believers needed to know them by heart. When a person stepped outside hearing range of the teacher or the teacher ceased to speak, they would need to have the truths of the faith in memory to believe them and to live according to them.

Centuries later, even after literacy rates had improved, the church continued to place an emphasis on memorizing the historical creeds. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) was an Italian Dominican monk, recognized as both a theologian and a philosopher well-versed in both secular and Christian settings. Mary Carruthers describes Aquinas as one of many men throughout church history who sought to make their memories “a library.”<sup>10</sup> Aquinas discusses a method for memorization in his work *Summa Theologica*. He explains, “Memory is perfected not by nature alone, but also by art and diligence.”<sup>11</sup> He then proceeds to teach readers a method for memorizing anything which they desire to remember. This text demonstrates that not only did Aquinas exercise the practice of memorizing different types of material, he also felt that his readers would benefit from the practice.

Another example of Aquinas’ concern for memorization is found in his commentary on the last phrase of the Apostle’s Creed. He tells the reader, “Man should frequently call these things to mind, since thereby he is urged to good things and drawn away from evil.”<sup>12</sup> Aquinas is an example of the use and teaching of memorization. He

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<sup>10</sup> Mary Carruthers, “Memory, Imagination, and the Interpretation of Scripture in the Middle Ages,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible*, ed. Michael Lieb, Emma Mason, and Jonathan Roberts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 215.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *The “Summa Theologica” of Thomas Aquinas Part 2 (First Part)*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1918), 34.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *The Three Greatest Prayers: Commentaries on the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and the Apostles’ Creed*, trans. Laurence Shapcote (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1937), 89.

passed on a method of memorization to his readers that they might memorize the things of the faith, and he specifically urged them to memorize the Apostle's Creed. His use of memorization was widespread during the Middle Ages. Clinton Arnold writes, "The focus on learning doctrine has long been a part of the common understanding of 'catechism' in Catholic and Protestant circles. Memorization of the creed was probably the main form of catechesis in the middle ages."<sup>13</sup>

Martin Luther (1483-1546) is one of the most pivotal and well-known individuals in the history of the Christian church. He created a catechism for adults and a smaller catechism for children. Consisting of a series of questions with corresponding answers that parallel a biblical text, doctrine, or Christian practice, catechisms are a clear example of the use of memorization throughout church history. Roland Bainton says that Luther expected fathers to enforce the learning of the catechism by their children and their servants. Luther's sentiment was that if children do not learn they should not eat and servants that do not cooperate should be sent away.<sup>14</sup>

In both his larger and smaller catechisms Luther states the expectation that the believer will memorize word-for-word both the catechism and Scripture passages outside of the catechism. In Luther's preface to his smaller catechism he teaches the following:

But when you are teaching the young, retain the same form and manner without change; teach them, first of all, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, etc., always presenting the same words of the text, so that those who learn can repeat them after you, and retain them in the memory.<sup>15</sup>

Luther intended believers to memorize word for word his catechism along with the biblical texts that accompany them. He thought memorizing Scripture was of the utmost

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<sup>13</sup> Clinton Arnold, "Early Church Catechesis and New Christians' Classes in Contemporary Evangelicalism," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47, no. 1 (March 2004): 48.

<sup>14</sup> Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1950), 349.

<sup>15</sup> Martin Luther and Joseph Stump, *An Explanation of Luther's Small Catechism: A Handbook for the Catechetical Class* (Philadelphia: General Council, 1909), x.

importance. In his larger catechism, he declares, “Remember that it is not only a matter of hearing the Word; it must also be learned and retained. Think not that it is an optional matter with you or one of no great importance, but that it is the command of God, who will require an account of you as to how you have heard and learned and honored his Word.”<sup>16</sup> During the Reformation, children were primarily educated by memorizing catechisms in this type of a question and answer format.<sup>17</sup> Luther valued the practice of memorization and passed it down to his followers through the words of his catechism, which has been utilized since its writing in 1529.<sup>18</sup>

Christians have taught and memorized numerous creeds and catechisms throughout the entire history of the Christian church. The Apostle’s Creed has been dated as early as the second century and there are many creeds and catechisms in use around the world today. Their authors intended believers to memorize them. While they are in no way a replacement for Scripture, in memorizing these summaries of biblical truth believers can rapidly build a crucial foundation of correct belief and practice.

## **Meditation**

Another way Christians have implemented memorization in discipleship is through the practice of biblical meditation. The Puritans wrote extensively on, and practiced, the spiritual discipline of meditation. They saw the practice as essential to a believer’s spiritual health and taught it as a command of God taught in the Bible. Thomas Manton (1620-1677) says, “It is not only a moral help that may be observed or omitted, but a necessary duty, without which all graces would languish and wither. Faith is lean

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<sup>16</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther’s Large Catechism—God’s Call to Repentance, Faith and Prayer: The Bible Plan of Salvation Explained*, trans. John Nicholas Lenker (Minneapolis: Luther Press, 1908), 63.

<sup>17</sup> Arnold, “Early Church Catechesis,” 48-49.

<sup>18</sup> Bainton, *Here I Stand*, 346.

and ready to starve unless it be fed with continual meditation on the promises.”<sup>19</sup> It is through meditation that believers take what they hear or read and cement it as part of who they are.

For the Puritans, meditation is focusing one’s mind on the truths of Scripture and thinking about them in order to better understand them and apply them to one’s life. John Ball (1585-1640) defines meditation by saying, “Meditation is a serious, earnest and purposed musing upon some point of Christina instruction, tending to lead us forward toward the Kingdom of Heaven and serving for our daily strengthening against the flesh, the world, and the Devil.”<sup>20</sup> Meditation leads to application in the life of the believer. Its purpose was to plant the truth of what was heard or read in the believer’s mind and heart so that they would live them out each and every day. William Bridge (1600-1670) writes, “It is a vehement, an intense application of the soul, unto a thing; whereby a man’s mind doth dwell, and insist, and abide upon it, for his profit, and benefit.”<sup>21</sup>

Memorization plays an important part in the Puritan concept of meditation. Henry Scudder (1584-1659) describes meditation as taking the “thoughts of the best things” and fixing them there by serious thought.<sup>22</sup> Meditation keeps thoughts in the mind. Scudder and other Puritans illustrate meditation with the idea of a beast who “chews the cud.” He writes, “All the outward means of salvation do little good in comparison, except by meditation they are thoroughly considered, and laid up in the heart.”<sup>23</sup> Fixing the truths of the Scriptures in the mind through meditation will allow the

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<sup>19</sup> Thomas Manton, *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton* (London: James Nisbet, 1874), 17:270.

<sup>20</sup> John Ball, *A Treatise on Divine Meditation* (London: H. Mortlock, 1660), 3.

<sup>21</sup> William Bridge, *Christ and the Covenant* (London: Thomas Parkhurst, 1667), 414.

<sup>22</sup> Henry Scudder, *Christian’s Daily Walk* (Glasgow: W. Collins, 1826), 154.

<sup>23</sup> Scudder, *Christian’s Daily Walk*, 154.

believer to recall both the concepts and portions of the original words to mind when desired. Meditation can involve intentional memorization of the text word for word. It may also be memorizing the story, concepts, and flow of the Scriptures. Often meditation will lead to memorization of the words of the texts by simply dwelling on them and thinking about them for a sustained period of time, even when it is not the goal.

The Puritans describe meditation as a practice with the purpose of retaining biblical words, stories, and concepts in the memory for recollection when needed and lived out each day. Thomas Watson (1620-1686) writes, “Without meditation the truths of God will not stay with us; the heart is hard, and the memory slippery, and without meditation all is lost; meditation imprints and fastens a truth in the mind.”<sup>24</sup> Meditation may or may not include planned memorization of the Words of Scripture, but the Puritans are certain that it will lead to a collection of the words and truths of Scriptures in the heart. Watson goes on to say, “Serious meditation is like the engraving of letters in gold or marble, which endure; without this all our preaching to you is but like writing in sand, like pouring water into a sieve, like throwing a bur upon a crystal, which glides off and doth not stay.”<sup>25</sup> David Saxton explains the place of memorization in Puritan meditation: “The mind struggles to retain scriptural truth. The believer improves his knowledge and retention of God’s Word through meditation because he essentially memorizes and breaks down each phrase of God word.”<sup>26</sup> One goal of meditation for the Puritans was the memorization of biblical truths and words so that they would endure in the mind of the believer.

The Puritans provide a diligent and passionate example of believers who put

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<sup>24</sup> Thomas Watson, *The Saint’s Spiritual Delight, and A Christian on the Mount* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1830), 75.

<sup>25</sup> Watson, *The Saint’s Spiritual Delight*, 76.

<sup>26</sup> David W. Saxton, *God’s Battle Plan for the Mind* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2015), loc. 2323, Kindle.

effort into retaining the Scriptures in their hearts and minds. They taught and practiced meditation and memorization as a daily priority and an essential Christian practice for spiritual health.

### **Scripture Memory Plans**

Scripture Memory Plans are a relatively recent development in the Christian tradition. Today, there is a massive number of different plans for memorizing Scripture in books and on the internet. Some of these plans provide verses to memorize selected by topic or progression through a book of the Bible. Others assign verses as well as a schedule or a method for memorizing the verses.<sup>27</sup> This section surveys several notable Scripture memory plans.

Scripture memory plans include daily scheduled exercise for the sole purpose of memorizing Scripture. Joshua Choonmin Kang says, “The process of recording Scripture on your mind and heart does have a mechanical aspect. It requires certain methods and a great deal of perseverance.”<sup>28</sup> Memorization can happen naturally through hearing or reading without intentionality. However, it occurs much more rapidly and precisely when done in a strategic and methodical plan. Kang lists two rules that are present in any successful Scripture memory plan. The first is memorizing new verses each week. The second is a daily schedule for reviewing verses previously memorized.<sup>29</sup>

Dawson Trotman (1906-1956) is best known as the founder of the Navigators,

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<sup>27</sup> Applications for smartphones, such as BibleMinded, BibleMemory, Verses, and YouVersion, provide many different Scripture memory plans. For example, BibleMemory allows users to select plans under different topics. The topic “giving” provides verses that are focused on that topic, including Ps 41:1-3, Prov 11:25, Eccl 11:1-2, Matt 6:1, Matt 25:34-36, Mark 9:41, Luke 6:38, Acts 20:35, Rom 12:13, 2 Cor 9:6-7, and 1 John 2:17. The application does not provide a schedule but does allow someone to mark each one as complete once memorized. This application also allows a person to choose a book of the Bible and memorize it verse by verse.

<sup>28</sup> Joshua Choonmin Kang, *Scripture by Heart* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 80.

<sup>29</sup> Kang, *Scripture by Heart*, 80.

an organization that now ministers the gospel in over 100 nations. It began as work with men in the Navy and has expanded to minister to both men and women, civilian and military all around the world. Trotman has also been commended for his practice of Bible memorization, as he memorized two new verses a day at certain points in his life.<sup>30</sup> Memorized Scripture was heavily influential in the story of his own conversion.<sup>31</sup> He believed in its usefulness to evangelism and included it in his discipleship materials. The boy's clubs and Sunday school classes that he led required Bible memorization and asked parents to check off the passages their children recited to them.<sup>32</sup> His biographer, Betty Skinner, writes of when he spoke to the sailors of the Navigators: "No one present would deny that the topic he harped on most often was Scripture memory."<sup>33</sup> He put pressure on those around him to memorize Scripture and he held them accountable. Trotman created a memory system based on cards with memory verses on them. Throughout his life, he would revise the system many times. Some sets had as many as 105 verses included in them.<sup>34</sup> He encouraged people to carry the cards in small leather packets so that they could review them at any convenient time.<sup>35</sup> Dawson Trotman's emphasis on Bible memorization is still making an impact on the Christian church today through the Navigators, his Topical Memory System, and a whole generation of disciple makers that he influenced.

Fighter Verses is a popular Scripture memory plan. This system includes a 5-

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<sup>30</sup> Betty Lee Skinner, *Daws: A Man Who Trusted God* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1974), loc. 496, Kindle.

<sup>31</sup> Skinner, *Daws*, 213.

<sup>32</sup> Skinner, 421.

<sup>33</sup> Skinner, 1118.

<sup>34</sup> Skinner, 1131.

<sup>35</sup> Skinner, 1535.

year plan that involves memorizing one verse each week. Fighter verses began with an emphasis on children memorizing Scripture but has since been expanded to be a tool for adults as well. Like the Topical Memory System of the Navigators and Dawson Trotman, the verses have been put on cards for people to carry with them for review.

Andrew Davis, pastor of First Baptist Church, Durham, North Carolina, has authored a Scripture memory plan in his short book *An Approach to Extended Memorization of Scripture*. One thing that makes this plan unique is that it advocates the memorization of entire books of the Bible over the individual, disconnected, verses chosen by topic or theme. Individual verses isolated from their context make up the majority of Scripture memory plans available today. Davis says this is significant because it does not skip verses which are important to make the case or argument that Scripture is making.<sup>36</sup> He says, “Memorizing entire books verse by verse enables the person to go easily from the ‘trees to the forest’ and back again.”<sup>37</sup> This plan provides a daily exercise that includes reciting yesterday’s verse, learning today’s verse, and reciting one’s progress in the book up to this point. After memorizing the book, one would use the next 100 days to simply recite the book each day.<sup>38</sup>

Donald Whitney says there are many good resources for memorizing Scripture in both print and digital formats. He also suggests selecting verses based on needs that a person may wish to meet.<sup>39</sup> One benefit of Scripture memory plans is that they provide a goal or point of accountability to keep a person moving forward. Whitney says, “Because of our tendency toward sloth, most of us need more accountability on scripture memory

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<sup>36</sup> Andrew M. Davis, *An Extended Approach to the Memorization of Scripture* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador International, 2014), loc. 186-98, Kindle.

<sup>37</sup> Davis, *Extended Approach to Memorization of Scripture*, 198.

<sup>38</sup> Davis, 239-398.

<sup>39</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014), 42-43.

than on other Disciplines.”<sup>40</sup> Working alongside others will increase the level of accountability.

Today, there are a plethora of intentional Scripture memory plans available to the believer. Even with the vast number of these plans, the practice is severely underutilized in the lives of most Christians. For those who have committed themselves to the practice, there is great benefit. The passion and care believers have evidenced in preparing such a great number of these plans shows their value to believers.

## **Conclusion**

This section has shown the use of memorization throughout church history as a tool to educate believers. From its beginning, the church has often prepared portions of its liturgy with the intention that believers would memorize and learn it. The church has formed creeds and catechisms for believers to memorize. It teaches meditation which leads to memorization. Many have created systematic plans to memorize Scripture. These believers saw the benefit of memorizing valuable material and committed themselves to the practice. Throughout the history of the Christian church, memorization has been practiced to educate its members.

## **Improving Memory**

A common excuse for not committing the Bible to memory is the claim that one does not have a strong memory. However, when people discipline themselves to work at memorizing Scripture they can strengthen and improve their ability to memorize it. Some of this improvement is due to the value of mnemonic devices. There is also benefit in the regular use of memorization and mnemonic devices. As a person works at memorization, he or she strengthens the ability to recall information. This section supports the thesis of this chapter by demonstrating that regular and intentional

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<sup>40</sup> Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 44.

memorization can improve the ability of a learner to recall information.

Memory is a facility that can improve and strengthen through various techniques. Peter Brown defines mnemonic devices as “mental tools that can take many forms but generally are used to help hold a large volume of new material in memory, cued for ready recall.”<sup>41</sup> There are methods of improving a person’s ability to recall information that have been taught and utilized with positive results. This section introduces some of the methods used and then demonstrates that these methods have been successful in improving and strengthening memory.<sup>42</sup>

### **Mnemonic Devices**

The “first letter mnemonic” is one of the simplest most commonly used methods of memorizing information. This method employs the first letter of each fact to create acronyms or acrostics.<sup>43</sup> To memorize the fruit of the spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 a person could associate it with the sentence, “Lucy joined proper people knitting gigantic fuzzy green shirts.” The first letter of each word in the sentence is the first letter of the corresponding fruit of the spirit. The sentence will help a person to remember each of the fruit of the spirit in their biblical order.

The “link method” associates or links a word or abstract idea with an image that is easier to remember than the word or abstract idea itself. The image can also represent multiple words in one image. This method involves creativity and imagination. For example, if one wanted to memorize the first two verses of Psalm 23, one could

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<sup>41</sup> Peter Brown, Henry L. Roediger III, and Mark A. McDaniel, *Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 163.

<sup>42</sup> The mnemonic devices listed below are only a small number of the devices that people utilize. Many of them have numerous versions where people have taken them and molded them to individually work best. In fact, some of the devices on this list evolved from one another.

<sup>43</sup> Francis S. Belleza, *Improve Your Memory Skills* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Direct, 1982) 79.

visualize a shepherd with four arms. One is pointing up to God, representing, “The Lord is my Shepherd.” Another, wagging their finger at the visualizer, representing, “I shall not want.” A third hand, holding a sheep down on the green grass making it take a nap, representing, “He makes me lie down in green pastures.” The final hand, with its index finger in front of the shepherd’s mouth, is hushing a stream of water at his feet, representing, “he leads me beside quiet waters.” Each of the arms and their action represents one of the lines of the first two verses of the 23rd Psalm. The associations simply need to point the person towards the words they want to remember. This method is most effective when one employs an exciting or personally-significant image. Joshua Kang explains that biblical authors and teachers used these types of connections in Scripture to make their teachings more memorable. They used memorable images that were familiar to their listeners. Kang points to the uses of images such as shepherds, vines, figs, the temple, and weddings as examples of images that Jesus used in his teachings.<sup>44</sup>

The “loci method” utilizes the “link method” and takes it a step further. It has been traced back all the way to the Roman Cicero (106-43 BC) or the Greek Simonides (556-468 BC). There is no way to know with certainty the origin story of this method. The ancient Greeks used it and the Romans taught it.<sup>45</sup> The method works by taking the information which one intends to commit to memory and placing it in the imagination.<sup>46</sup> A “memory palace” is an imaginary location used in the “loci method.” A person would begin with a location that the person is familiar with. They would image the place and see it in their mind. One could use various imaginary locations. People often choose gardens,

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<sup>44</sup> Kang, *Scripture by Heart*, 116.

<sup>45</sup> Gopal Sarma, “The Art of Memory and the Growth of the Scientific Method,” *Interdisciplinary Description of Complex Systems* 13, no. 3 (June 2015): 376-77.

<sup>46</sup> Carruthers, “Memory, Imagination, and Interpretation of Scripture,” 224.

roads, or buildings. Within that location, they chose specific points such as trees, pictures, pieces of furniture, or lamps. Next, they connect an image related to each fact, to each of the objects. To recall the facts, they walk through the memory palace in their mind and see the images at their assigned locations. Dominic O'Brien, the 8-time world memory champion, calls the method the "journey method."<sup>47</sup> This method is generally used when a person wants to memorize a long series of facts. They would create a journey in their mind with a number of stops or locations that correspond to the number of facts. For example, if one is trying to recall a verse of Scripture, they will have a stop for each word in the verse. At each stop, they will, in their imagination, place an image that links to the word that goes in that spot. When they want to recall the verse, the person will walk through the journey in their imagination and visit each of the images associated with the words of the verse. Another form of the "journey method" is to put the images into a story instead of a journey. The logical flow of a story is also easier to remember than random words or abstract facts.

The "peg system" is another way to organize facts in the memory. It is also derived from the "link method." This method uses consistent images called "pegs," to keep the information one wants to memorize in order. Francis Belleza describes the memory as a floorless closet where the only way to keep something within reach is to hang it on a peg. He writes, "When enough pegs have been created, we will have a way of storing a great deal of information in the memory at any one time."<sup>48</sup> These peg words are a way of ordering facts that a person wants to remember. They would connect each peg word to an image. Belleza gives this poem to help a person remember their peg words, "one is a bun, two is a shoe, three is a tree, four is a door."<sup>49</sup> When a person has a

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<sup>47</sup> Dominic O'Brien, *You Can Have an Amazing Memory: Learn Life-Changing Techniques and Tips from the Memory Maestro* (London: Watkins, 2011), 48.

<sup>48</sup> Belleza, *Improve Your Memory Skills*, 23.

<sup>49</sup> Belleza, 24.

list they need to keep in order, such as the results of a race, the peg system is best used by connecting the image of the bun to the first runner and the image of a shoe to the second runner. If trying to memorize Jacob's 12 sons in order by their birth, a person would first need peg words for numbers 1 through 12. If someone used Belleza's poem to remember the first four of Jacob's sons a person could imagine a Reuben sandwich on a bun to represent Reuben as the first son, next a giant letter S being squeezed into a shoe for Simeon as the second son, Levi as the third son could be a tree wearing a pair of Levi's jeans, and a person one knows named Judah knocking on a door to represent Judah as the fourth son. They then connect an image to each one of the peg words representing each of the remaining sons of Jacob.

A "phonetic system" is a mnemonic device used to memorize numbers. This device uses keywords. Consonants receive a numerical value and combine to make words. For example, if one used a system of numbering consonants in the English alphabet starting with "b" one, "c" as two, "d" as three, and so on, the date 1928 becomes the keyword "black." Add vowels as needed.<sup>50</sup>

A drawing can also be a mnemonic device. A person could draw an image or series of images to represent the material which they want to memorize. The picture can be either visualized or reproduced when it is time to recall the information.<sup>51</sup> Whitney connects this mnemonic device to Scripture memory: "Nothing elaborate is needed here, just a few lines or stick figures beside each verse, or some sort of picture or clip art if done on-screen. This makes the verse 'visual' and puts the picture-is-worth-a-thousand-words principle to work for you."<sup>52</sup> Remembering where the pictures are on the page will

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<sup>50</sup> Adam Putnam, "Mnemonics in Education: Current Research and Applications," *Translational Issues in Psychological Science* 1, no. 2 (2015): 131.

<sup>51</sup> Frits F. B. Pals et al., "Memorization Methods in Science Education: Tactics to Improve the Teaching and Learning Practice," *International Journal of Science Education* 40, no. 2 (2018): 227-41.

<sup>52</sup> Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 43.

aid in recalling the order of the verses and give some help in remembering the key thought of each verse.

Songs, stories, and rhymes are also great mnemonic devices for the recollection of information. Singing a familiar song helps remember the alphabet. The tune is easy to remember. The saying “I before e except after c” is a rhyme that helps to recall a grammatical rule.<sup>53</sup> The books of the Bible can also be put to a tune to memorize them in order.

Petrus Ramus (1515-1572) championed the “dialectic method” in the sixteenth century. Gopal Sarma writes, “In this method, a subject is first structured in a logical manner by proceeding from the most general concepts to the most specific. Content is memorized through repetition.”<sup>54</sup> The form of repetition is not important. It could be either vocal or written. Ramus rejected the ancient methods which used images and places based on two reasons. First, the images used were often vulgar. Many times the practitioner visualized beautiful women or other immoral images. He argued for a connection with the fourth commandment against graven images. In addition, he felt that the use of images was distracting when using it to give a speech or some other activity beyond simply recalling facts.<sup>55</sup>

Each of these mnemonic devices are successfully used to memorize information. In addition, all aid the memorization of Scripture and other biblical concepts. The variety of devices allows people to choose one that best suits themselves and the information that they want to memorize. The next section studies the ability of these devices to improve and strengthen a person’s ability to recall information.

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<sup>53</sup> Putnam, “Mnemonics in Education,” 131.

<sup>54</sup> Sarma, “The Art of Memory,” 382.

<sup>55</sup> Sarma, 382-83.

## Improving Memory

The World Championship of Memory boasts competitors who are able to memorize impressive amounts of information. However, most of the competitors do not believe they have always possessed above-average memories. Journalist-turned-memory-competitor Joshua Foer characterizes his conversations with many of the different memory championship competitors by saying, “All the other mental athletes I met kept insisting . . . that anyone could do what we do.”<sup>56</sup> These competitors do not believe themselves to have special natural abilities. Instead, they learned methods to increase their ability to memorize and they trained themselves in these methods. “Mental athletes” compete at events such as memorizing the order of multiple decks of cards, memorizing a poem word for word, matching faces with names, and memorizing a page of a thousand random digits.<sup>57</sup> The ability of these mental athletes to perform above the levels of the untrained individual demonstrates that their techniques improve one’s ability to complete memory challenges.

For many believers, the excuse for not memorizing Scripture is that they do not have a good memory. Commitment and effort are essential to memorizing Scripture. If believers do not consistently work at memorization, they will forget what they have put in their memory and their mind will not be in the practice of memorizing new information. People will not commit themselves to endeavors they feel are in vain. Demonstrating that there are methods to improve one’s ability to memorize Scripture will encourage believers to commit themselves to the practice.

Anders Ericsson studied research done with world class memory performers in the world memory championship. Researchers asked the group of expert performers to complete memory challenges while an MRI recorded their brain activity. They also asked

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<sup>56</sup> Joshua Foer, *Moonwalking with Einstein: The Art and Science of Remembering Everything* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011), 9.

<sup>57</sup> Foer, *Moonwalking with Einstein*, 8.

a control group of non-experts to complete the same challenges while recorded by the same systems. The experts outperformed the non-experts in memorizing information by using mnemonic methods (predominately the loci method). The MRI recorded higher levels of brain activity in those sections of the brain responsible for “spatial memory and navigation” and “learning associations” in the experts. Ericsson summarizes the researcher’s findings: “The observed differences in memory between the world-class memory performers and the control participants do not support the existence of naturally superior memory and are consistent with the experts’ skilled application of special encoding strategies.”<sup>58</sup>

In another study conducted by Ericsson and William Chase, they chose a male undergraduate student whom they labeled “SF.” In the beginning, he tested average in intelligence and average in memory. They tested him 3 to 5 days a week using a digit span test.<sup>59</sup> For this test, the subject reads a series of random digits and attempts to recall them from memory. If the subject is successful, a digit is added to the span for the next attempt. If the subject fails, the administrator removes a digit. The subject’s digit span measures the results. The digit span is the highest number of digits that he could remember half of the time. SF began with a digit span of 7. He did not progress, until week five when he began to connect small series of digits to numbers with which he was already familiar. SF was a runner and was familiar with running times and running statistics. He began to connect small series of digits to running times and used them as a mnemonic device. SF reached a digit span as high as 82. A digit span of over 10 is very uncommon. The authors of the study concluded, “Exceptional memory is a skill based on

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<sup>58</sup> Anders Ericsson, “Exceptional Memorizers: Made, Not Born,” *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 7, no. 6 (June 2003): 234.

<sup>59</sup> Anders Ericsson and William Chase, “Exceptional Memory: Extraordinary Feats of Memory Can Be Matched or Surpassed by People with Average Memories That Have Been Improved by Training,” *American Scientist* 70, no. 6 (November-December 1982): 607-15.

learned cognitive processes, developed through extensive practice and experience, that allows for rapid and efficient use of LTM (long term memory). Further, this skill is developed within the basic abilities and limits of the normal cognitive system.”<sup>60</sup>

Peter Brown, in his book *Make It Stick*, describes discoveries concerning the human brain that point to the improvement and strengthening of memory through consistent exercise of mnemonic practices. One discovery involves the myelin coating. Brown states, “Research strongly suggests that increased practice builds greater myelin along the related pathways, improving the strength and speed of the electrical signals and, as a result, performance.”<sup>61</sup> Brown makes much of the mutability of the brain. It is changing, strengthening, and weakening in different ways. As people use devices and systems to memorize information their brains become more efficient at performing the task. Brown writes, “Another fundamental sign of the brain’s enduring mutability is the discovery that the hippocampus, where we consolidate learning and memory, is able to generate new neurons throughout life.”<sup>62</sup> The brain is able to grow and strengthen. With consistent practice and rehearsal of mnemonic devices, the human brain becomes better at memorizing information. Brown expounds,

Learning and memory are neural processes. The fact that retrieval practice, spacing, rehearsal, rule learning, and the construction of mental models improve learning and memory is evidence of neuroplasticity and is consistent with scientists’ understanding of memory consolidation as an agent for increasing and strengthening the neural pathways by which one is later able to retrieve and apply learning.<sup>63</sup>

Neuroscience has shown that the brain is capable of change. It has also demonstrated that that change can affect its performance in a positive way and that the repeated practice of mental activities can strengthen the brain’s ability to perform that activity.

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<sup>60</sup> Ericsson and Chase, *Exceptional Memory*, 614-15.

<sup>61</sup> Brown, *Make It Stick*, 171.

<sup>62</sup> Brown, 172.

<sup>63</sup> Brown, 172.

## **Conclusion**

Memory is a facility that can improve and strengthen through various techniques. This section presented various techniques used to memorize information before demonstrating that the use of a person's memory improves that person's ability to memorize future information. According to leading research in the field, any person can improve their ability to memorize information. If this is true, then a believer who wants to memorize Scripture can employ these techniques to train themselves to better memorize the Bible. It does not require an exceptional memory. All believers are able to train and strengthen their ability to memorize Scripture.

## **Memorization in Education**

Memorization is a successful form of education. To demonstrate the truth of this statement this section surveys modern literature and research. While memorization has been used to educate people throughout recorded history, the focus will be on more recent material examining memorization in education. Memorization is regularly used by students at all levels, although educators do not often teach mnemonic devices. Elementary students memorize spelling words and multiplication facts, while older students memorize the periodic table or landmarks, states, and capital cities in geography. This section shows the success of memorization in educating students across various disciplines.

By demonstrating the success of memorization in education, the benefit of Scripture memorization in the life of the believer will gain clarity. The value of Scripture memory is greater than the value of memorizing secular material because it is the Word of God that is memorized. It is "living and active" (Heb 4:12) and it will not return to him empty (Isa 55:11). God is present in his Word and will use it to sanctify, encourage, heal, and teach his people in a way that will not occur in the materials memorized in this research.

## Modern Research

Research has proven that mnemonic devices are successful forms of education. This survey begins with Dr. Gregory Laing. He conducted a study using two mnemonic devices and a control group. The study concentrated on first-year accounting students in introductory courses. He named the two mnemonic devices ALORE and PALER. The two devices are different acronyms to explain the elements of accounting equations, the notion of debits and credits, and the principles of the basic accounting cycle. Researchers administered students in each of the groups a pre-test which showed that there was no discernable difference between the control group and the groups utilizing a mnemonic device. After the two treatment groups learned their mnemonic devices, they completed a post-test. The results of the post-test showed that the two groups using mnemonic devices performed significantly better than the control group.<sup>64</sup> Laing concluded, “Overall, the results of this study are consistent with prior research, which suggested that a mnemonic device would likely accelerate the rate at which new information is acquired.”<sup>65</sup>

In another study, Kamil Jurowski, Anna Jurowski, and Malgorzata Krzeczowska conducted a review of 55 different pieces of theoretical and empirical literature related to mnemonic devices and their use in teaching. The authors make an important distinction concerning the use of mnemonic devices in education when they point out that they are not meant to be comprehensive education strategies but are strategies to memorize information.<sup>66</sup> Mnemonic devices cannot be the total of education because they do not teach how to utilize or think about the information, they simply make the information that needs to be memorized quicker and easier to recall. The literature that

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<sup>64</sup> Gregory Kenneth Laing, “An Empirical Test of Mnemonic Devices to Improve Learning in Elementary Accounting,” *Journal of Education for Business* 85, no. 6 (2010): 353.

<sup>65</sup> Laing, “An Empirical Test of Mnemonic Devices,” 354.

<sup>66</sup> Kamil Jurowski, Anna Jurowski, and Malgorzata Krzeczowska, “Comprehensive Review of Mnemonic Devices and Their Applications: State of the Art,” *International E-Journal of Science, Medicine & Education* 9, no. 3 (November 2015): 5.

this review surveyed spanned across the science disciplines, special education, and English as a second language. They demonstrated that mnemonic devices were successfully being used to help students recall information. Remembering information is an essential part of education in any discipline. After surveying this plethora of information, the authors concluded, “This review has looked at various perspectives of the value of mnemonic devices. From a cognitive perspective, mnemonic strategies are effective because they form an effective acoustic-imaginal link between the stimulus and response.”<sup>67</sup>

Adam Putnam researches the use of memorization in education and summarizes his findings, saying, “The keyword, loci, and peg mnemonics all effectively enhance recall for some materials, such as keyword-friendly materials and lists of concrete nouns.”<sup>68</sup> Putnam interacts with material that argues against the effectiveness of memorization in education. He argues that it has its place and is successful when its limitations are understood and when the methods are utilized with the right types of information. They are not as helpful in “high order skills.”<sup>69</sup> These are skills such as analyzing, evaluating, and creating. Mnemonic devices are successful when dealing with the correct types of information and do assist the learning of higher-order skills. They speed up the memorization of facts that are essential for higher skills and give more time for educators to focus on those skills. He finds mnemonic devices effective for some simple types of information such as dates, lists, facts, and word-for-word memorization of composition but not for information that includes more complex ideas or concepts.

Additionally, researchers in the Netherlands investigated the use of memorization in science students. Memorization interests them because they say,

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<sup>67</sup> Jurowski, Jurowski, and Krzeckowska, “Comprehensive Review of Mnemonic Devices,” 7.

<sup>68</sup> Putnam, “Mnemonics in Education,” 134.

<sup>69</sup> Putnam, 132.

“Students’ ability to recall what they call ‘declarative knowledge’ not only facilitates the understanding of new and related learning material. It may help to enhance students’ capacity to analyze the nature of science problems.”<sup>70</sup> The authors see long-term value to memorization that is beyond simply remembering facts. Memorization can benefit a student’s ability to complete high order skills. Their study involves ninth and tenth-grade students learning nine scientific propositions in physics and chemistry. The study compared rote memorization to a drawing-based mnemonic which called for the student to draw an image to represent the most important part of each proposition. After being given five minutes to memorize the information the students completed tests at three different time intervals. The first was after five minutes, the second after one week, and the final test was given after three weeks. The results showed that the drawing mnemonic effectively aided students to recall the information at a significantly higher level. This shows that memorization and also the method of memorization used can affect the success of acquisition and retention.

Kenneth Higbee and Shirou Kinihira discuss Japanese educator Masachika Nakane’s creation and use of a mnemonic device. Nakane calls the device Yodai. It is different from other mnemonic devices in that it is primarily used to teach principles and rules instead of facts. Yodai means “the essence of the structure.” The name is fitting because the mnemonic seeks to “summarize the essence of the structure of subjects, and of the processes of problem-solving, into short phrases.”<sup>71</sup> Yodai uses catchy phrases, rhymes, and songs to teach mathematics, science, spelling, grammar, and English. The power of this mnemonic device has been demonstrated in videos of children as young as 5 years old solving elementary algebra, trigonometry, and calculus problems.<sup>72</sup> In one

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<sup>70</sup> Pals et al., “Memorization Methods in Science Education,” 228.

<sup>71</sup> Kenneth L. Higbee, *Your Memory: How It Works and How to Improve It* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1977), 63.

<sup>72</sup> Higbee, *Your Memory*, 58.

study completed by Kunihiro, he taught third, fourth, and fifth-grade students a mnemonic representing rules pertaining to fractions. A bug represented a fraction. The numerator was its head, and the denominator was its wing. Catchy phrases contained the rules pertaining to fractions. After two 45-minute sessions teaching the mnemonic device the students tested as well as students in the grade level above them.<sup>73</sup> In another controlled study, Kunihiro took Nakane's Yodai and brought it to the United States. He updated the device from a bug to activities that American children are more familiar with. The study taught children in 3rd grade, who had not yet learned fractions, four operations with fractions using the new mnemonic. According to Higbee, "On an immediate posttest, the third graders performed calculations as well as sixth graders who had been taught the traditional way and better than fourth and fifth graders."<sup>74</sup>

The final piece of literature in this survey is an article in the *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education* offering a mnemonic device to help pharmacy students assess a patient's drug therapy.<sup>75</sup> The mnemonic used was "I ESCAPED CPR." Each one of these letters represent a word that reminds the pharmacist of an aspect of their patient's condition to help to determine what action is necessary. Researchers prepared a test with two patient scenarios in which the students would determine if the medication was appropriate for the individual. Educators taught the treatment group the mnemonic device but did not teach it to a control group. The mean score of the treatment group was 6 percent higher. Afterward, educators taught the control group the mnemonic device and 82 percent of them said they would use the mnemonic device in the future. The authors summarize the usefulness of the mnemonic by stating, "It enhances pharmacy students'

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<sup>73</sup> Higbee, *Your Memory*, 59.

<sup>74</sup> Higbee, 61.

<sup>75</sup> Christine B. Bruno et al., "A Mnemonic for Pharmacy Students to Use in Pharmacotherapy Assessment," *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education* 76, no. 1 (2012): 1-6.

ability to remember the most important parameters when assessing a patient's drug therapy to maximize benefit and minimize risk."<sup>76</sup> This article is important because it is evidence that high-level educators are utilizing memorization and mnemonic devices in order to teach students to operate in real-world scenarios in a highly specialized field of study. Students will use the mnemonic device in the treatment of real patients, not simply to pass a test in a classroom.

Memorization is a successful form of education. Memorization of the Bible will share the benefits to education found in these studies. Kang highlights these benefits: "Learning Scripture by heart is like teaching children how to fish; it builds up the mind with discipline and spiritual knowledge, and that will affect our attitude towards life."<sup>77</sup> The memorization of Scripture internalizes the way of God in the mind of a believer. It guides them and encourages them throughout their life. It embeds in them the truth that they need to be able to make godly decisions.

### **Conclusion**

Memorization has been used throughout history to successfully educate. It has been used in both the church and in secular education. The endurance of these practices proves their usefulness. The number of people who educate others by memorization, and have learned through the use of memorization, is proof that it is a successful form of education. When educating by the use of memorization there are various methods that a person can employ to better the ability to memorize information. These methods can make it easier and quicker to retain information while also aiding in the recollection of the information. There is a plethora of research proving that mnemonic devices strengthen one's ability to memorize information and that memorization plays a

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<sup>76</sup> Bruno et al., "A Mnemonic for Pharmacy Students," 6.

<sup>77</sup> Kang, *Scripture by Heart*, 68.

successful role in education. It is important to note that much of the research referenced in this chapter is concerned with school-aged children. Memorization is an applicable form of education, especially among young people. Therefore, Bible memorization is a valuable discipline for the believer. Its practice benefits the retention of biblical material, the application of the principles memorized, and future efforts to memorize. The Scriptures teach us to memorize them (Deut 11:18; Josh 1:8; Ps 119:9; Col 3:16; 1 Pet 3:15). Church history, the success of mnemonic devices, and modern educational research agree that Bible memorization is a beneficial discipline in order for the believer to learn and live out godliness.

CHAPTER 4  
IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAM OF SCRIPTURE  
MEMORIZATION FOR YOUTH AT EBC

This chapter outlines the preparation and implementation of my program of Scripture memorization for youth at Eubank Baptist Church (EBC). The purpose of the project was to train the youth of EBC to memorize Scripture. Fulfillment of four goals determined the success of the project. The first was to assess the current level and practice of Bible memorization among youth at EBC. The second, to develop a Scripture memory curriculum for the youth at EBC. The third goal was to train youth at EBC to memorize Scripture and value this discipline. The final goal was to improve the Scripture memory plan and develop a priorities list for further implementation. Each step of the project focused on these goals and the overall purpose.

**Curriculum Preparation**

To train students to value and practice Bible memorization, I prepared a 12-week curriculum.<sup>1</sup> It took three weeks to plan and prepare the curriculum for implementation. Six principles directed the preparation of the curriculum. It had to be biblically faithful, accessible to grades 6-12, adequate to challenge students, teach the importance of Bible memorization, set students up to succeed in memorizing the assigned passages of Scripture, and be of a length sufficient to determine effectiveness. These principles guided the creation of a rubric given to an expert panel to grade the curriculum.<sup>2</sup> The rubric consisted of a question representing each principle to evaluate the

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 5 for a sample of the curriculum.

<sup>2</sup> See appendix 2.

curriculum. To meet the goal, it had to grade 90 percent sufficient.

A great deal of study informed the creation of the curriculum. Study in the spiritual discipline of Bible memorization, as well as the secular studies of mnemonics and educational practices bolstered the curriculum. This study utilized the Bible and Christian books along with secular books and journal articles. Two years of doctoral seminars at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in the field of Biblical Spirituality also impacted the study. I designed the program with the influence of many of these resources.

The curriculum ran from August 25, 2019, through November 15, 2019. I chose these dates because it was ideal to maximize attendance at the introductory event and the 12 weekly meetings. The school district in which the vast majority of EBC students attend began classes on Wednesday, August 7. Beginning after this date minimized the occurrence of out-of-town family trips that may have caused students to miss. These dates also allowed the curriculum to end before Thanksgiving. This allowed for 12 weekly meetings consecutively without missing.

The curriculum included an introductory event and twelve 45-minute sessions. Twelve weeks was an adequate time frame for the curriculum because it is long enough for students to complete the challenge to memorize Philippians 1, to experience the value of Bible memorization in their lives, and to develop the long-term habit of memorizing Scripture. A longer period may have caused students to lose interest in the topic. This curriculum concentrated on the book of Philippians because of its simplicity, its length (it is easily divided into 12 sections), and EBC students had not recently focused on it in group Bible Study.

The introductory event introduced students to Bible memorization, the book of Philippians, and the challenge to memorize Philippians 1. It also prepared students to practice Bible memorization before the first week of the curriculum to ensure as much time as possible to work on memorization. The introduction gave the students a method

to begin memorizing Scripture. This curriculum used the method presented by Andy Davis in his book *An Approach to the Extended Memorization of Scripture*.<sup>3</sup> The event also introduced mnemonic devices such as the “peg” system, writing, drawing, and the “loci” method to students. I introduced these devices, but did not fully teach them, to give students resources that they could further study and use if desired in the future. The event also presented why Bible memorization is vital to the life of a believer so that students understood why they should put effort into the practice. During the introductory event, students memorized Philippians 1:1. This gave them time to use the method they learned while it was fresh in their minds, practice the method with supervision, and the ability to ask questions if needed. The curriculum encouraged word-for-word memorization of the passage. To ensure fidelity to the truth of the text, errors of even a single word were corrected. Many times, an error in a single word is inconsequential. However, leniency could eventually result in more serious errors.

Teaching through the book of Philippians alongside memorizing it gave students an understanding of what they were memorizing. This aided not only in the memorization of the book but also in the benefit of the memorized material to the spiritual life. The introduction to the book in this event gave an overview of the major themes, historical background, and placement in the Bible. Included in the event, between sessions, were games that this group of students enjoys playing, to allow them to move and to refocus their minds.

Each of the 12 sessions of the weekly curriculum ran approximately 45 minutes. The curriculum divided weekly meetings into three primary sections, beginning with an encouragement to diligently work on memorization of the Bible. Each week a new passage of Scripture was read that highlighted a benefit of memorizing Scripture.

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<sup>3</sup> Andrew M. Davis, *An Extended Approach to the Memorization of Scripture* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador International, 2014), Kindle.

For each text, the curriculum explained the benefit to the Christian life that the text reveals. The second section gave students 15 minutes to pair up and practice memorizing Philippians 1. Students took turns reciting the verses they had learned up to that point while their partner checked and corrected their progress with a Bible in hand. The final section of each night was a Bible study taught in the book of Philippians. Throughout the 12 weeks, I taught the entire book.

An expert panel consisting of two parents of youth-aged students, two youth pastors, and a senior pastor evaluated the curriculum on a rubric to determine its effectiveness. Blake Ruckel and Martin Wheeldon agreed to be the parent representatives on the panel. Both men have children between sixth and twelfth grades. Jimmy Cevado (youth minister at Chaparral Hills Baptist Church, Amarillo, Texas), Shawn Ingram (youth minister at Journey Community Church, Stanford, Kentucky), and Brent Rowe (senior pastor at Calvary Baptist Church, Danville, Kentucky) filled the clergy positions on the panel. The second goal of this project was to receive 90 percent sufficient on the evaluation rubric. The expert panel gave the curriculum a score of 96 percent sufficient, meeting the goal set for the curriculum. The panel did not offer many recommendations for improvement. One did mention a more detailed explanation of the mnemonic devices; however, I felt that more time spent on the mnemonic devices would take time from topics that were more critical to the overall purpose of the project.

To determine the effectiveness of the program, I created a pre-curriculum survey and a post-curriculum survey.<sup>4</sup> An increased score after the curriculum when compared with the scores from the survey administered pre-curriculum determined effectiveness. The survey began with three screening questions to gather basic information about the student that may help interpret data. The remainder of the survey consisted of 12 statements by which students rated the frequency that the statement is true

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<sup>4</sup> See appendix 1 (pre-curriculum survey) and appendix 3 (post-curriculum survey).

of them. Each of these statements ascertained growth in one of three categories. The first was the practice of Bible memorization. Throughout the curriculum, the practice of Bible memorization should increase. Increasing practice of the discipline would help students see its value and to develop the habit of intentionally memorizing Scripture. The second category pertains to the practice of other biblical spiritual disciplines. Intentionally memorizing passages of Scripture should positively influence the practice of other biblical spiritual disciplines, such as Bible reading and prayer. The remaining survey statements were for the purpose of measuring the understanding of the benefit of Bible memorization in the life of a believer. The responses of the students to these statements demonstrated the impact of their memorization of Scripture on various aspects of their spiritual life. Each of these categories in the survey highlighted the curriculum's effectiveness in teaching the discipline and its benefits to the students. Before administering the survey, 4 students, each from a different grade, read the survey to ensure that each question was understandable to a person in the targeted age group. Each student answered affirmatively that all questions were easily understood. In addition to all statements from the pre-curriculum survey, the post-survey also included a question asking the number of verses memorized from Philippians 1. This question helped determine the effort put into memorizing and the progress that each student made in their efforts. For the curriculum to have its desired effects on the lives and practices of students, their effort was necessary.

### **Program Promotion**

Promotion prepared students and parents for the Scripture memory program. For three weeks, leading up to the beginning of the curriculum, EBC leadership encouraged attendance at the introductory event and the weekly sessions in the announcement portion of church's Sunday morning worship service, at the beginning of youth Sunday School classes, and the Wednesday night youth meeting. The Wednesday

night before the beginning of the program a youth parent meeting introduced parents to the Bible memory program, informed them of the challenge to memorize Philippians 1, and showed the method of memorization to help them assist their children throughout the curriculum. Parent engagement is essential to the success of students in ventures such as Bible memorization.

Promotion continued throughout the curriculum to motivate parents and students to remain focused on the Philippians 1 memory challenge. It also encouraged attendance at the weekly meetings. Church leadership continued to publicize the event through announcements in the Sunday morning worship service, individual conversations with parents, social media, and announcements in all other youth-related events.

For a student to qualify for consideration in the results of this project they had to attend the introductory event as well as 8 of the 12 sessions of the Wednesday night meeting. This was to ensure that students who qualified for consideration in the results of the project adequately experienced and participated in the curriculum. Promotion of the program was essential to ensure that the highest number of students were present to meet the criteria for qualification. The more students involved, the more weight the findings of the project would hold because of a greater sample size.

### **Introductory Event**

The introductory event followed the Sunday morning worship service on Sunday, August 25, 2019, from 12:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. It introduced students to Bible memorization, the book of Philippians, and the challenge to memorize Philippians 1. The choice to hold the event on this day and time maximized the number of students who attended the event. This time, following the church's primary worship service, maximized the number of students on church campus at the time the event would start, making it easier for them to attend. Its conclusion coincided with the release of adult evening activities to encourage parent attendance at adult activities and to make pickup

convenient for those parents. There were 27 students who attended the introductory event.

Following the conclusion of the Sunday morning worship service at noon, the students ate lunch together. Directly after lunch, an opening session informed the students of the schedule for the day and gave a brief description of the events to come. The students then completed the pre-curriculum survey. Students created a PIN based on their birthdate to ensure anonymity in the completion of their surveys and make it possible to pair their pre-curriculum survey with their post-curriculum survey.

At 2:00 p.m., students gathered for a session to introduce the book of Philippians. To introduce Philippians, the students gathered in small groups and answered a 10-question quiz using their Bibles. Answering these questions forced students to do a brief reading of the book. They explored topics such as the historical circumstances of the writing of the letter, its placement in the canon, and important concepts. Students gained a thorough overview of the book of Philippians. Upon completion of the quiz, the whole group discussed the quiz to allow time for correction and deeper consideration of the book.

At 4:00 p.m., students gathered for a session to introduce Bible memorization. The goal of this session was to show students that God, in his Word, presents Bible memorization as a vital spiritual discipline that is beneficial for the spiritual life of a believer. The session explored three Scripture passages: Psalm 1, 1 Timothy 4:7, and 2 Timothy 3:16-17. It highlighted what each passage says concerning Bible memorization. The students listened to this session as a whole group. Discussion questions provided opportunity for the students to engage with the topic.

At 6:00 p.m., students gathered for a session to teach a method for Bible memorization and to begin the memorization of the passage by memorizing Philippians 1:1. I taught and demonstrated the three-step method to the students. Students watched and listened as I memorized Philippians 1:1. I then taught and demonstrated four

mnemonic devices to the students. Both the “peg” system and the “loci” method need substantial demonstration for students to grasp. The students grew restless and were not paying attention in this section of the event. I ended the discussion more quickly than I intended and moved on to the next part of the curriculum. To immediately put into practice the methods that they learned, I challenged students to begin memorizing the passage by immediately memorizing Philippians 1:1. After ten minutes, students chose a partner and then demonstrated what they had memorized.

Between these sessions, the students played games that they had learned and enjoyed in the past. They ate dinner and ice cream. These times allowed students to refresh their minds, move their bodies, and enjoy fellowship with one another. At 7:00 p.m., I dismissed students with the challenge to memorize Philippians 1 throughout the 12-week curriculum. Upon their arrival I reminded parents to encourage students in their efforts to memorize the passage of Scripture.

### **Weekly Meeting**

For 12 weeks following the introductory event, students met for 1 hour and 15 minutes on Wednesday nights from 6:45 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. This meeting filled the time slot for the regularly scheduled Wednesday night youth meeting at EBC. It coincided with Wednesday Night adult and children’s activities. The curriculum filled 45 minutes of that time slot.

Each night began with food at 6:45 p.m. This is a regular part of EBC’s Wednesday night youth meetings. The meal lasted from 6:45 p.m. until 7:15 p.m. When students finished eating, they had free time for the duration of the time slot. At 7:15 p.m., everyone went to the youth room. To begin I made any necessary announcements. Next, I led the group to pray a section of Philippians 1 in the model presented by Donald

Whitney in his book *Praying the Bible*.<sup>5</sup> This was a regular practice that students were familiar with. Next, a verse or several verses of Scripture highlighted a reason why Bible memorization is important to the believer's spiritual life. The leader presented the passage and then encouraged students to fervently pursue the work of memorization with the benefits offered.

At this time, students divided into pairs and spread out across the room. One student would recite what they had memorized up to this point and the other student would correct any errors and help where needed. When done, they would switch roles. During this time, the adult leaders encouraged students to be diligent in their efforts and to stay focused on the activity. The curriculum allotted 15 minutes for this activity. However, often students were beginning to lose focus after 10 minutes and the decision was made to move on to the Bible Study.

This 15-minute memorization activity was the primary opportunity for leadership to encourage and help students with their memorization of Philippians 1. Therefore, I was diligent during this time to recognize students who were struggling or losing attention on the task. To help struggling students I reminded them of mnemonic devices discussed in the introductory event, reminded them of the positive progress they had made thus far, reminded them of God's promises to work through his Word, and in some cases worked with them individually.

After memorization practice, students returned to their original seats with a Bible. At this point, I taught a Bible Study on the book of Philippians. Each week the study progressed through the book concentrating on a manageable section of the text. It contained both teaching and discussion questions. Students engaged in the discussion questions well. Discussion generally consumed a majority of our allotted time. At 8:00 p.m. I dismissed students with prayer.

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<sup>5</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Praying the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2015).

On the final Wednesday night of the 12-week curriculum, leadership distributed the post-curriculum surveys and the student evaluations to students who had attended the introductory event. I encouraged students to answer truthfully. They completed the survey and evaluation before being dismissed at the conclusion of the night. The only difference between the post-curriculum survey and the pre-curriculum survey was the inclusion of a question asking how many verses of Philippians 1 the student had successfully memorized. Only the surveys of those students who had attended 8 of the 12 weeks of the curriculum were kept for research data. In total, 18 students qualified for consideration in the results.

The following Wednesday night, November 20th, the first Wednesday night following the completion of the curriculum, I encouraged the students to continue memorizing Scripture. I challenged them to continue memorizing Philippians or to memorize their favorite Bible story. I had not written this into the curriculum but became convinced that most students would cease Bible memorization without further direction. I intend to regularly ask about progress and to encourage memorization of new texts.

### **Analysis of Survey Data**

An increase represented in the results of the post-curriculum survey in comparison with the pre-curriculum survey determined effectiveness of the curriculum to teach students to practice and value Bible memorization. When compared, there is a significant increase in positive survey responses. A t-test on the results of the two surveys revealed a 2.581 t-stat compared to a 1.73t t-critical one tail. The mean pre-curriculum survey score was 46.666, which increased in the post-curriculum survey to 53.111. The statistics resulted in a p-value of .00969 which is less than .05, showing the data to be a significant finding.

Below are included a figure and a table that each represent the results of the pre-curriculum and post-curriculum surveys. The results for each student are connected to

their PIN. It is visible in each case what the t-test showed. There was a significant increase in the scores on the post-curriculum surveys when compared to the pre-curriculum surveys.

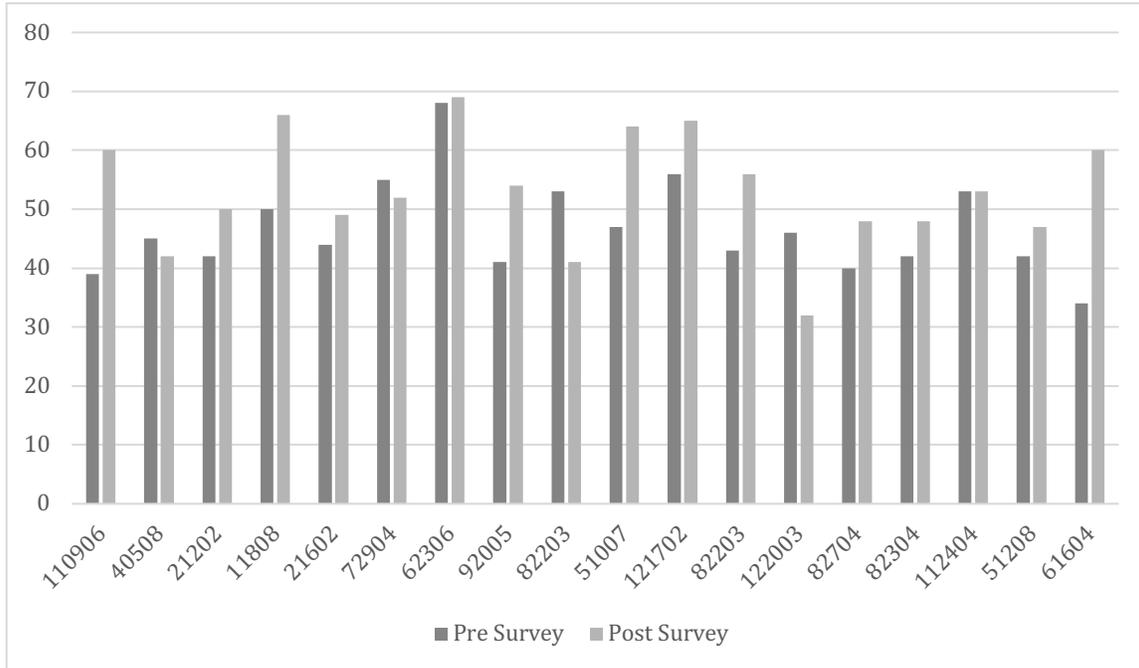


Figure 1. Comparison of pre-curriculum and post-curriculum survey data

These statistics show that the curriculum increased the practice of Bible memorization. The three statements increasing the most were all related to the practice of Bible memorization. The statement, “I set aside intentional time to memorize verses from the Bible,” increased a cumulative 20 points throughout the 18 qualifying students. “I use a systematic method to memorize verses from the Bible” increased 18 points. The greatest increase came on the statement, “I have encouraged others to memorize verses from the Bible,” with a 25-point total increase. It is important to note that the pre-curriculum scores on these three statements were substantially lower than any of the other statements. This stresses the need to grow in the practice of Bible memorization before the beginning of the curriculum. A fourth statement, “I am confident I can memorize

verses from the Bible,” increased 8 points across the 18 students but held a higher pre-curriculum score than the other three in this category.

Table 1. Comparison of pre-curriculum and post-curriculum survey data

Student	Pre-Curriculum Survey	Post-Curriculum Survey	Change
110906	39	60	+21
40508	45	42	-3
21202	42	50	+8
11808	50	66	+16
21602	44	49	+5
72904	55	52	-3
62306	68	69	+1
92005	41	54	+13
82203	53	41	-12
51007	47	64	+17
121702	56	65	+9
82303	43	56	+13
122203	46	32	-14
82704	40	48	+8
82304	42	48	+6
112404	53	58	+5
51208	42	47	+5
61604	34	60	+26

According to survey data, the curriculum was successful in getting students to increase their practice of Bible memorization during the duration of the curriculum.

Table 2. Statements on practice of memorization in pre- and post-curriculum surveys

Statement	Pre-curriculum survey	Post curriculum survey	Change
I set aside intentional time to memorize verses from the Bible	39	59	+20
I use a systematic method to memorize verses from the Bible	50	68	+18
I have encouraged others to memorize verses from the Bible	48	73	+25

The practice of other biblical spiritual disciplines also showed a statistical increase. “I set aside intentional time to read the Bible,” increased 4 total points, and “I set aside intentional time to talk to God” increased 6 points. These statements represent the practice of prayer and Bible reading in the lives of the students. While the numerical increase may seem small it was also only derived from 12 weeks of memorization. If the practice of Bible memorization continued long-term, the increase in those spiritual disciplines may grow. Another thing to keep in mind is that statements concerning prayer and Bible reading had less room to grow than other categories. The total pre-curriculum survey scores, of all students combined, on those two questions were 68 and 88 out of a possible 108 on the pre-curriculum surveys. Questions on the practice of Bible memorization scored 39, 50, and 48, cumulatively. The growth in prayer and Bible reading is in a smaller number of students who had room to grow in those statements. For example, in the statement concerning prayer half of the students scored a 6 on the pre-curriculum survey, which is the highest value available, leaving no room to increase.

Table 3. Statements on other spiritual disciplines in pre- and post-curriculum surveys

Statement	Pre-survey cumulative score	Post-survey cumulative score	Change
I set aside intentional time to read the Bible.	68	72	+4
I set aside intentional time to talk to God.	88	94	+6

Understanding of the value of Bible memorization in the life of a believer also increased, according to research data. Alongside statements on the practice of other spiritual disciplines, these statements also began with stronger scores in the pre-curriculum survey. The statement, “I understand what the Bible teaches about Bible memorization” increased a combined 12 points throughout the 18 students. “Memorizing verses from the Bible is important to me” increased 4 points. “I feel closer to God when I recall a verse that I have memorized” increased 8 points. “When I have a hard decision to make, verses I have memorized are helpful to me” declined 6 points from a total of 82 to 76. This is the only statement to decrease between the pre-curriculum survey and the post-curriculum survey. However, the statement “When I am tempted to do or say something, I know is wrong, Bible verses I have memorized are helpful to me,” increased 8 points. “Memorizing verses from the Bible helps me live according to Jesus’ teaching” increased 9 points. It is important to remember that the scores on these statements were relatively high in the pre-curriculum survey, leaving little room for improvement. Even with that being true, a noticeable increase is visible.

Students memorized on average 7.94 verses from Philippians 1. One student memorized all 30 verses of the chapter. Five students reported memorizing less than 5 verses from the chapter. I had mixed feelings about the effort of the students in the memorization challenge.

Table 4. Statements on value of memorization in pre- and post-curriculum survey

Statement	Pre-curriculum survey	Post-curriculum survey	Change
I understand what the Bible teaches about Bible memorization.	77	89	+12
Memorizing verses from the Bible is important to me.	81	85	+4
I feel closer to God when I recall a verse that I have memorized.	84	92	+8
When I have a hard decision to make verses, I have memorized are helpful to me.	82	76	-6
When I am tempted to do or say something, I know is wrong, Bible verses I have memorized are helpful to me.	66	74	+8
Memorizing verses from the Bible helps me live according to Jesus' teaching.	79	88	+9

Some students pleased me, while others disappointed. An important statistic to take note of is the progress in the scores in the 4 students who memorized more than 10 verses. In these 4 students, total scores increase by a cumulative 65 points from the pre-curriculum survey to the post-curriculum survey. This demonstrates that student diligence is an important factor in the impact of the curriculum. Those students who committed themselves to the practice of Bible memorization saw the greatest increase in other spiritual disciplines as well as seen in its impact on their spiritual wellbeing.

Table 5. Survey data for students memorizing more than 10 verses

Student	Pre-curriculum Survey	Post Curriculum Survey	Change
110906	39	60	+21
62306	68	69	+1
51007	47	64	+17
61604	34	60	+26

### **Conclusion**

I was pleased with the preparation for the program. The literature reviewed in chapters 2 and 3 of this project was essential in preparing the program. The promotion was successful in garnering an impressive number of students from the youth ministry to qualify for consideration in the data for the project, and it informed parents of how to contribute to their children's success in the program. Implementation went as planned. Many students diligently engaged in the program and cooperated, but several students disappointed in their efforts. Data collection relied on students to be honest and attentive to their responses. They did well. The data collected was helpful and made clear that the project had made progress in the purposes that it pursued.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

This final chapter evaluates the project, assesses its goals by highlighting how each goal was met through the course of the project, discusses the strengths and weaknesses, and finally, it suggests ways to improve the project paying specific attention to overcoming its weaknesses. It also offers personal reflection.

#### **Evaluating Goals**

Fulfillment of four goals determined the success of the project. The first was to assess the current level and practice of Bible memorization among youth at EBC. The second goal was to develop a Scripture memory curriculum for the youth at EBC. The third goal was to train youth at EBC to memorize Scripture and value this discipline. The fourth and final goal was to improve the Scripture memory plan and develop a priorities list for further implementation.

#### **Goal 1: Assessing the Current Level and Practice of Bible Memorization**

As stated above, the first goal was to assess the current level and practice of Bible memorization among youth at EBC. I administered a survey to determine the current practice and understanding of Bible memorization. At the beginning of the introductory event before any of the curriculum content, each student completed the 15-question survey. The completion of the survey by each student marked the accomplishment of this goal. A total of 27 students attended the introductory event and each of them completed the survey. The goal was successfully fulfilled. Students were attentive to completion of the survey and their answers reflected what I expected. As

detailed in chapter 4, the survey answers showed that the students severely lacked in their practice of Bible memorization.

### **Goal 2: Develop Scripture Memory Curriculum**

The second goal was to develop a Scripture memory curriculum for the youth at EBC. I developed a 12-week curriculum including a 7-hour introductory event. This curriculum sought to teach students to value and practice Bible memorization. An expert panel consisting of two parents, two youth ministers from other churches, and a lead pastor from another church evaluated the Scripture memory curriculum. The panel was to grade the curriculum according to a rubric, grading six different elements on a scale of insufficient, requires attention, satisfactory, or excellent. The curriculum realized the goal when the curriculum met satisfactory in 90 percent of the evaluation criteria. If the curriculum did not reach satisfactory, I would have needed to revise it until the curriculum reached the goal. I assembled a panel that fit the stated qualifications and provided each member a copy of the curriculum and a scoring rubric. They gave the curriculum a 96 percent satisfactory rate surpassing the goal of 90 percent.

### **Goal 3: Train Youth to Memorize Scripture**

The third goal was to train youth at EBC to memorize Scripture and to value the discipline. I dispensed the post-curriculum survey on the final night of the curriculum. The post-curriculum survey included all questions from the pre-survey with the addition of one to ascertain their progress in memorizing Philippians 1. Each student created a 6-digit pin using their birthdate when completing the pre-curriculum survey. These numbers identified each survey pair. Research data only considered students who attended the opening retreat and eight of the twelve weekly sessions. The goal was met if the results of the assessment showed a considerable increase in the valuing and practice of Scripture memorization. The t-test discussed in the previous chapter showed a

considerable increase in valuing and practicing Scripture memorization.

#### **Goal 4: Improve Scripture Memory Plan**

The fourth goal was to improve the Scripture memory plan and develop a priorities list for further implementation. This goal measured completion by the creation of a priorities list for improving the Scripture memory plan for future implementation. The student evaluation, completed with the post-curriculum survey by students who qualified, aided in the completion of the priorities list. The evaluation included 6 questions focusing on clarity of teaching. I administered and collected the evaluations. Some students gave helpful feedback, but the majority did not. Instead, they left questions blank or filled with non-answers. Using the evaluations and my observations I completed a priorities list for improving the Scripture memory plan. The content of the priorities list is further discussed later in this chapter in the “Improving the Project” section.

#### **Strengths**

The primary strength of this project was its consistent push to motivate students to memorize Scripture. For this project to accomplish its stated purpose, to train the youth of EBC to memorize Scripture, it was essential to get them to practice Bible memorization. There is no greater motivation to memorize Scripture than to see that one can successfully memorize it and then see the positive ways that it affects one’s life. When people see that they are capable of accomplishing a goal it helps them to feel good about the task and about performing it in the future. Also, once a believer memorizes Scripture, he or she will experience the benefits of the memorized words of God. Chapter 2 demonstrated that Bible memorization benefits the Christian life by providing wisdom, promoting faithfulness, combating temptation, increasing the fruitfulness of prayer, and undergirding obedience and blessing. When students experience these benefits, the benefits will motivate them to memorize Scripture in the future.

The project gave students a guided plan and method for memorizing Scripture. It provided an adequate time frame for them to be successful. Throughout the 12 weeks, leadership supported, encouraged, and spurred the students on to greater diligence when needed. This gave students the best environment to practice Bible memorization. It pushed them to work more persistently than they would have on their own. By doing so, students were more likely to see that they could be successful and to see the benefits of Bible memorization in their own lives as well as in the lives of their peers, memorizing Scripture alongside them.

Another strength of the project was the support students received from one another. The project inspired students to encourage one another in their practice of Bible memorization. Throughout the partner time on Wednesday nights and in other youth gathering times, some students encouraged one another, promoted healthy competition, and shared their progress. Those students seemed to be most successful in memorizing a larger number of verses. The Bible teaches that people are stronger and more successful when working with others. Hebrews 10:24 says, “Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds.” Ecclesiastes 4:9 reads, “Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor.” God put believers together to support and encourage one another on tasks such as memorizing Scripture. This truth was evident throughout this project. The curriculum gave opportunities for students to work together and promoted a group mentality by giving them a shared challenge to work side by side on completing their task.

A third strength of this project was its focus on Bible memorization and presenting it biblically. Often church leadership discusses this subject in the midst of other topics. It is rarely the main focus of a time of teaching or example in the church. Therefore, memorization is lost or at the least minimized by other topics. This leads to it never seeming important or valuable in the minds of believers. There is also never enough time given to teaching Bible memorization to adequately expose the biblical

teachings on the practice. Because of its focus on Bible memorization this project devoted 12 weeks and a 7-hour introductory event, totaling 16 hours to highlighting the practice and what God says about it in his Word. The amount of time that a teacher gives to a topic highlights its importance to the people. Because it focuses on the practice of Bible memorization, the curriculum included adequate time to explore what the Bible says about it and how it can affect the life of a believer. It kept the practice before the minds of the students each week to stimulate thought about the practice and to remind them of its importance. Twelve weeks of focused teaching, encouragement, and structured practice of Bible memorization are monumental because developing a habit is key to training one to memorize Scripture. Through the 12 weeks, some students who were diligent about the work and the curriculum provided sufficient time to develop a habit that they will hopefully continue even after the curriculum ends.

### **Weaknesses**

In any endeavor, it is important to always look back at the end to evaluate and determine what could have been done better. Evaluation must be honest and deep. This type of evaluation ensures improvement at the tasks God gives and teaches from mistakes that were made. This project had weaknesses that limited its ability to accomplish its purpose. Changes could better the project to more fully satisfy its purpose and achieve its goals.

Eubank Baptist Church has several very good adult volunteers who work with the youth ministry, in addition to the youth pastor. These adults should have been more actively involved in the curriculum. I did not involve the adult leaders in the planning process in any way. Often when I bring ideas to them, they will have excellent suggestions for how to better the idea. Their input in that process would also have been very beneficial and may have overcome the weaknesses discussed in this section. The curriculum could have included a section for training adult volunteers to assist the

training of students to memorize Scripture. These volunteers did their best to help the students throughout the curriculum without prompting or training. However, they did not know the method as well as they could have, nor were they certain how to help in the scope of the curriculum. I should have trained them in the method and instructed them on when and how to best assist the students in their efforts to memorize Philippians 1.

Another weakness of the project is that an incentive could have encouraged more diligence in the students in memorizing the challenge text. This is important because diligence was a contributing factor in the progress that students made both in memorizing Philippians 1 and in gaining an understanding of the practice and its value. This weakness comes as the direct result of a decision that was purposefully made early in the preparation process for the project. I had thought about adding an incentive for successful memorization of the passage but decided not to. That was a mistake. This decision was initially made because in recent times EBC's youth had participated in several activities that used incentives. At first, they seemed to work well. However, they had become increasingly ineffective in motivating students. I chose not to use prizes to give an incentive to memorize the passages. Instead of forgoing an incentive completely, I should have simply increased the incentive to a level that would have gotten their attention or used a new type of incentive that may have excited them. If running the project again, I would use a group incentive; for example, if 50 percent of students reach 15 verses the whole group will enjoy a prize, or if 25 percent of students reach 20 verses the whole group will enjoy a prize, or finally, if 10 percent of students reach 30 verses the whole group could be rewarded.

The third weakness of this project was the inclusion of certain mnemonic devices in the introductory event. The section of the introductory event that introduced mnemonic devices seemed to confuse the students. I had to cut this section short because they lost their attention. This further attributed to their bewilderment. Their confusion persisted into the weekly meetings. There are two possible ways to remedy the weakness.

One is to completely remove that section from the curriculum. The other is to remove discussion of the loci method and peg system. These two methods severely confused the students. There is not enough time to properly explain these mnemonic devices to teenagers available in the scope of this project. Both of these devices would require a greater amount of instructional time to be effective. This project needed to focus on training students in Bible memorization. These students have a minimal understanding of the practice and the time needed for also teaching these mnemonic devices were not available. Students did well with written memorization and drawing. These two devices were helpful, and the teenagers easily understood them. The time devoted to the loci method and peg system could be instead used to better explain written and drawing as devices to assist memorization.

The fourth weakness of the program was that it did not include instruction for further practice of Bible memorization to the students at the conclusion of the curriculum. Without further instruction, most students would not continue the practice. My desire is for students to practice the discipline throughout their lives, in order that God would use it to bless them with strength, faithfulness, and joy to his glory. To increase the likelihood that students will continue to memorize Scripture the curriculum should provide a plan for Scripture memorization after the curriculum. On the first Wednesday night following the end of the curriculum, I challenged students to continue memorizing Philippians or to memorize their favorite Bible story. Another option is to create a one-year memorization plan for students to use or find a satisfactory plan that has already been created by someone else. After one year, students would be comfortable enough with the practice to perpetuate their memorization of Scripture on their own.

To better the Scripture memory plan, I developed a priorities list for further implementation. In the future I intend to periodically use this curriculum with students. These changes would help it to better accomplish its purpose. This priorities list marks the fulfillment of the fourth goal of this project. The priorities list includes the following

four points. First, train adult volunteers to assist students in memorizing Scripture. Second, use an incentive to motivate students to more diligently memorize. Third, remove discussion of the loci method and peg system from the introductory event. Fourth, provide a Scripture memory plan to guide students in what to memorize after the conclusion of the 12-week curriculum. With these priorities, I will revise and improve the Scripture memory plan to better suit its purpose.

### **Personal Reflection**

Training students to memorize Scripture at EBC was a worthwhile task. I enjoyed the process from study and preparation to implementation and evaluation. I learned a lot throughout the project. I learned a lot about Bible memorization, its value, its place in the believer's life, methods for more effectively memorizing, and secular research on mnemonics and mnemonic devices. My practice of Bible memorization has been bolstered by the project. I needed to participate in the challenge alongside the students to memorize Philippians 1. I memorized all 30 verses; it was a challenge. I know many verses throughout the Bible by memory and have practiced systematic Scripture memory in the past but had not ever set myself to memorizing such a large chunk of continuous verses. It is a practice that I intend to continue.

Going through this process has improved my ability to pastor. As a pastor or leader in any organization, it is important to identify problems or weaknesses. When a problem is identified, one needs to be able to research and develop a plan to solve the problem, and then, implement the plan to solve the problem and see it through to the end. At the end of implementing the plan, it is essential to evaluate how it went to better respond to problems in the future. This is the process that I went through to complete this project. I saw a lack of understanding and practice of Bible memorization in my church, as well as a lack of teaching and example from leadership in this area. I heavily researched the practice in both biblical and extrabiblical sources and then developed a

plan to train students to memorize Scripture. I implemented the plan and then evaluated it to better it for future implementation. This process is essential for any leader. If the leader lacks in any one part of the process and is unable to solve the problems of an organization, he or she proves ineffective in this task. This project advanced my ability to pastor by taking me through the process of identifying a problem, finding a biblical solution, implementing the solution, and evaluating it to better respond to problems in the future.

This project has deepened my belief that Bible memorization is an essential pursuit for believers. It has great benefits for the Christian life that I have now seen in others and also experienced myself. Regular Bible memorization drives deeper thought and meditation on passages than simple reading. When I memorize a passage, I put deep consideration into each word. This causes me to see connections and lines of thought that I often miss when reading through portions of the Bible. Sustained, attentive reading of God's Word is a great benefit to me. I often find myself recalling passages that I have memorized to help me in various situations. The Holy Spirit reminds me of his Word that I have memorized, and I find myself repeating those words to encourage or strengthen myself to faithful action. Psalm 1 has been the most influential verse in my growth in Bible memorization. A tree needs water. Without it, the tree cannot live nor produce fruit. In the same way, I am certain that without the Word of God the believer cannot produce fruit nor live as God has intended. Memorizing Scripture is planting oneself near the water to live and to produce fruit.

### **Conclusion**

Through this project, God has grown me as both a pastor and a follower of Jesus. There are both strengths and weaknesses to learn from. Students and leaders alike grew in their understanding, valuing, and practice of Bible memorization. While this project does have a beginning and an end, my prayer is that both students and leaders

continue to memorize God's Words without end. I pray that God uses his memorized words to benefit the spiritual lives of those in my congregation, that together we will accomplish his purposes, do good to others, be pleasing to him, enjoy him, and bring glory to his name.

APPENDIX 1

PRE-CURRICULUM SURVEY

**Agreement to Participate**

This survey is being conducted by Jeremy Johnson for the purpose of collecting information for a Doctor of Ministry Project. The Survey you are about to complete is to identify your current practices Bible Memorization. Any information you provide will be confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your survey answers. Participation is voluntary. By completion of this survey, you are agreeing for the use of your responses in this project.

Personal Identification Number \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Screening Questions:

1. School grade: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Have you been baptized as a believer? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Are you a member of Eubank Baptist Church? \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Please check the one answer that best describes you.

4. I set aside intentional time to read the Bible.
- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all    | <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Once or twice | <input type="checkbox"/> Regularly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly       | <input type="checkbox"/> Every day |

5. I set aside intentional time to memorize verses from the Bible.
- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all    | <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Once or twice | <input type="checkbox"/> Regularly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly       | <input type="checkbox"/> Every day |

6. I set aside intentional time to talk to God.
- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all    | <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Once or twice | <input type="checkbox"/> Regularly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly       | <input type="checkbox"/> Every day |

7. I use a systematic method to memorize verses from the Bible.
- |                                       |                                       |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all   | <input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Almost never | <input type="checkbox"/> Regularly    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely       | <input type="checkbox"/> All the time |

8. I am confident I can memorize verses from the Bible.
- |                                       |                                       |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all   | <input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Almost never | <input type="checkbox"/> Regularly    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely       | <input type="checkbox"/> All the time |
9. I understand what the Bible teaches about Bible Memorization.
- |                                       |                                       |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all   | <input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Almost never | <input type="checkbox"/> Regularly    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely       | <input type="checkbox"/> All the time |
10. Memorizing verses from the Bible is important to me.
- |                                       |                                       |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all   | <input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Almost never | <input type="checkbox"/> Regularly    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely       | <input type="checkbox"/> All the time |
11. I feel closer to God when I recall a verse that I have memorized.
- |                                       |                                       |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all   | <input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Almost never | <input type="checkbox"/> Regularly    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely       | <input type="checkbox"/> All the time |
12. When I have a hard decision to make, verses I have memorized are helpful to me.
- |                                       |                                       |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all   | <input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Almost never | <input type="checkbox"/> Regularly    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely       | <input type="checkbox"/> All the time |
13. When I am tempted to do or say something, I know is wrong, Bible verses I have memorized are helpful to me.
- |                                       |                                       |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all   | <input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Almost never | <input type="checkbox"/> Regularly    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely       | <input type="checkbox"/> All the time |
14. I have encouraged others to memorize verses from the Bible.
- |                                       |                                       |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all   | <input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Almost never | <input type="checkbox"/> Regularly    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely       | <input type="checkbox"/> All the time |
15. Memorizing verses from the Bible helps me live according to Jesus' teaching.
- |                                       |                                       |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all   | <input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Almost never | <input type="checkbox"/> Regularly    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely       | <input type="checkbox"/> All the time |

APPENDIX 2  
CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Scripture Memory Curriculum Evaluation					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The curriculum is biblically faithful.					
The curriculum is accessible to students in grades 6-12.					
The curriculum adequately challenges the students.					
The curriculum teaches the importance of Bible memorization.					
The curriculum sets students up to succeed in memorizing assigned passages of scripture.					
The curriculum length is sufficient to determine effectiveness.					



7. I use a systematic method to memorize verses from the Bible.  
 Not at all  Occasionally  
 Almost never  Regularly  
 Rarely  All the time
8. I am confident I can memorize verses from the Bible.  
 Not at all  Occasionally  
 Almost never  Regularly  
 Rarely  All the time
9. I understand what the Bible teaches about Bible Memorization.  
 Not at all  Occasionally  
 Almost never  Regularly  
 Rarely  All the time
10. Memorizing verses from the Bible is important to me.  
 Not at all  Occasionally  
 Almost never  Regularly  
 Rarely  All the time
11. I feel closer to God when I recall a verse that I have memorized.  
 Not at all  Occasionally  
 Almost never  Regularly  
 Rarely  All the time
12. When I have a hard decision to make, verses I have memorized are helpful to me.  
 Not at all  Occasionally  
 Almost never  Regularly  
 Rarely  All the time
13. When I am tempted to do or say something, I know is wrong, Bible verses I have memorized are helpful to me.  
 Not at all  Occasionally  
 Almost never  Regularly  
 Rarely  All the time
14. I have encouraged others to memorize verses from the Bible.  
 Not at all  Occasionally  
 Almost never  Regularly  
 Rarely  All the time

15. Memorizing verses from the Bible helps me live according to Jesus' teaching.

Not at all

Occasionally

Almost never

Regularly

Rarely

All the time

How many verses from Philippians 1 did you memorize? \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX 4  
STUDENT EVALUATION

1. Were any parts of the curriculum unclear or difficult to understand?
  
2. How did the curriculum help you understand the importance of memorizing Scripture?
  
3. How did the curriculum help you to memorize Scripture?
  
4. What did you like about the curriculum?
  
5. What did you dislike about the curriculum?
  
6. How could the curriculum be prepared and taught more effectively?

APPENDIX 5  
SAMPLE 12-WEEK BIBLE MEMORIZATION  
CURRICULUM

This is a 12-week curriculum focused on teaching and encouraging the practice of Bible Memorization. Students will learn a method for memorizing scripture and be challenged to memorize Philippians 1.

The curriculum begins with a kick-off event, which will include an introduction to the book of Philippians, the practice of Bible Memorization, and the challenge of memorizing Philippians 1.

Following the introductory event, the curriculum includes 12 45-minute sessions in which students will be encouraged by the benefits of Bible memorization, practice what they have memorized of Philippians 1, and engage in a Bible Study of Philippians.

Below are the notes and discussion questions I will use to guide my teaching for the introductory event and the weekly sessions.

## Memory Challenge Kick-off Event

Instructions for bold time slots are provided in the curriculum.

12:00-1:00 Lunch

1:00-1:30 **Introduce Philippians**

1:30-3:00 Games (penny on the chin, tic tac toe, rps)

3:00-3:30 **Introduce Bible Memorization**

3:30-4:30 Free

4:30-5:00 **Teach Memorization Method**

5:00-5:30 **Begin Philippians 1 challenge (memorize Philippians 1:1)**

5:30-6:00 Dinner

6:00-7:00 Ice Cream

### Introduce Philippians

For the next 12 weeks, we will be working with the book of Philippians. To introduce the book students will use Bibles to answer the following questions in groups of 2-3.

1. Is Philippians written before or after Jesus' resurrection from the dead?
2. What book of the Bible is before Philippians?
3. What book of the Bible is after Philippians?
4. Why is the book called "Philippians"?
5. Who wrote Philippians?
6. Where was Paul when he wrote Philippians?
7. Who are Epaphroditus and Timothy?
8. What are three things the Book of Philippians teaches about the reader about Jesus?
9. In one word or phrase, describe how Paul feels about the Philippians?
10. What verse do you find most interesting?

### Introduce Bible Memorization

Are you good at memorizing things?

What do you generally do to memorize information?

Why is the Bible important?

How much effort have you previously put into memorizing the Bible?

Does your effort in memorizing the Bible match its importance to you?

Read Psalm 1. To memorize the Bible is to plant oneself beside the stream of God's Word where it can nourish our growth in godliness every moment of every day.

Job 23:12 reads, "I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." The Word of God is necessary to the spiritual life and memorizing ensures that it is with you at all times.

What does your effort in memorizing the Bible say about its importance to you?

Read 1 Timothy 4:7. God commands us to discipline ourselves for the purpose of becoming more like him. God's Word teaches his people to know him and be like him.

Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17. The Bible enables you to become who God wants you to be and equips you to do what God has called you to do. By memorizing his words, you implant this Word in yourself to affect you, to remember it when needed. Just like people train their bodies to have the strength needed, memorize the Bible to have God's Word.

Why should you memorize the Bible?

When might it be beneficial to know Scripture by memory?

### **Memorization Method**

Each day you will set aside 15-30 minutes to practice Bible Memorization.

Your practice should consist of 3 parts.<sup>1</sup>

1. Review what you have already learned. Recite 10 times from memory the portion of Scripture that you learned the previous day. Look at the Bible only if you are struggling.

---

<sup>1</sup> This method is highly influenced by Andy Davis' book "An Approach to the Extended Memorization of Scripture."

2. Recite All that you have learned from Philippians up to this point, always beginning with Philippians 1:1.
3. Memorize the next verse. There are varying methods of memorization that you could use to help you memorize Bible verses.

Written memorization. Write the verses 10 times and then attempt to recite the verse. If you do not succeed, repeat until you can remember the verse.

The “loci” method. You will need to select a location that you know extremely well (your house, the church). Each verse will be represented by a “stop” or specific place or object in your location (a doorway, a picture on the wall, a plant). You will connect important words from the verse to its location. To recite the verses you want to recall visualize yourself walking through your “memory palace.”

The “peg” system. You will visualize at least two images for each verse. One is an image related to the verse number (one is bun, two is shoe, three is tree...) You will then visualize an image to represent what the verse says. You may need more than one if the verse encompasses two different prominent ideas. You will then connect the images into a picture that you can imagine easily. These images must simply direct you to remember the concept, not each word of the verse.

Draw. Draw a simple picture to represent each verse. Keep the pictures together so that you can flip through them like a book. Recite the verse as you look at the picture. When successful, remove the picture and attempt to visualize it in your mind as you recite the verse. When reciting multiple verses visualize yourself flipping through the picture book.

Questions?

### **Philippians 1 Challenge**

For the next twelve weeks, you will be challenged to memorize Philippians 1. There are 30 verses in chapter 1. That is memorizing two and a half verses a week. Today, we are going to memorize Philippians 1:1. Only 29 more to go.

Separate and work on memorizing Philippians 1:1. When 5 minutes remain in the allotted time, you will partner up into groups of 2 or 3 and recite what they have learned to one another.

## Weekly Curriculum (45 minutes)

### Week 1

#### Prayer

Philippians 1:1-2

#### Encourage

Read 1 Timothy 4:7. Bible Memorization promotes godliness.

#### Practice

With a partner, take turns reciting the verses you have learned up to this point. While your partner is reciting what they have learned you will use a Bible to check and correct what they have memorized.

#### **Philippians 1:1-11. Focused on Jesus in others.**

When you pray for others, what types of concerns do you often pray for?

Name some recent examples of times you helped someone else?

What is the most important aspect of a person's life Physical, Emotional, Spiritual, or Relational? Why?

Often, we are concerned for the health, finances, relationships, and worldly troubles of others. However, the more important aspect of their lives is their relation to Jesus. It is of the greatest and more lasting value. Paul speaks to the past, present, and future of the Philippians and in each He is focused on their relation to Jesus.

Their past - He gives thanks for and enjoys their participation in the gospel (v1-5).

When have you helped someone grow in Jesus?

Their present - He recognizes that God is doing a good work in them (v6).

What is the "good work" that God is doing in the lives of his people?

Their future - He prays that they would gain godly wisdom and the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus (v7-11).

Explain what Paul is praying for in verse 9?

What does it mean that the fruit of righteousness comes “through” Jesus?

How can you help others to grow in Jesus?

If you love God more than anything, understand his worth, and understand the extent to which the gospel changes a person’s life you must desire him for others. God wants us to love people in many different ways. However, know that only Jesus heals the whole person.

## Week 12

### Prayer

Philippians 1:29-30

### Encourage

Read John 17:17. Bible Memorization supports your sanctification.

### Practice

With a partner, take turns reciting the verses you have learned up to this point. While your partner is reciting what they have learned you will use a Bible to check and correct what they have memorized.

### **Philippians 4:14-23. Focused on Jesus' provision (pt. 2)**

The Philippians have supported Paul's ministry when so many others have not. Verse 17 makes it clear that Paul is more concerned with how their giving, benefits them, than he is about the money that they are sending to him.

How does giving benefit the giver?

What motivates a person to sacrifice of their own things and gives to others?

What causes a person to not be willing to give?

Paul reiterates the fact that it is God who gives you what you need, not money or anything of this world.

What does it mean to need something?

What do you need? Why?

Only through Jesus can we have eternal life with God. Everything else will one day be gone. Only with God will you be satisfied and become who you were created to be.

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## ABSTRACT

### DEVELOPING A PROGRAM OF SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION FOR YOUTH AT EUBANK BAPTIST CHURCH IN EUBANK, KENTUCKY

Jeremy Lane Johnson, DMin  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020  
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Matthew D. Haste

The purpose of this project was to train the youth of Eubank Baptist Church, in Eubank, Kentucky, to memorize Scripture by completing a 12-week curriculum. It taught the value of the practice of memorization, and methods to successfully memorize Scripture, and it gave students opportunity to practice intentional memorization of Philippians 1. Chapter 1 describes the project's context, rationale, purpose, goals, research methodology, and limitations. Chapter 2 demonstrates that the Bible teaches Bible memorization as a vital spiritual discipline. Chapter 3 uses extrabiblical material to argue that memorization is an applicable form of education to help young people learn, process, and utilize information in real-world situations. Chapter 4 details the project's preparation, promotion, implementation, and data analysis. Chapter 5 evaluates the strengths, weaknesses, purpose, and goals of the project and explores ways to improve it.

## VITA

Jeremy Lane Johnson

### EDUCATION

BA, Georgetown College, 2007

MDiv, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007

### MINISTERIAL EMPLOYMENT

Youth Pastor, Dry Run Baptist Church, Georgetown, Kentucky, 2006–2009

Senior Pastor, Polly Ann Baptist Church, Eubank, Kentucky, 2009–2011

Associate Pastor of Children and Youth, Eubank Baptist Church, Eubank,  
Kentucky, 2011–