

Do We Lay It To Heart?

Every parent knows the difference in “Do I have to go?” and “Do I get to go?” “Do I have to go to bed?” means the child wants to stay up. “Do I get to go to the show?” means the child wouldn’t miss it for anything.

Isn’t it strange that some of us will wave those same clear signals with reference to the Lord’s service, and not see that we are being just as transparent as our children? “Do we have to go to Bible study?” says the same thing about our desires as it does when voiced by our child. When one asks, “How much must I give?” he is saying clearly, “I do not want to give anything, and would like to know how little will pay the bill.” Either that, or he has failed to grasp the most fundamental and essential element in the spirit of acceptable service unto God.

There can be no coming to Christ except we deny or give self (Matt 16:24). Translated into the context of “doing” this means we must first want to do all possible (100% committed) to serve the Lord. The proper spirit must motivate the doing, or it is shallow and empty --- may even be an abomination in His sight (Hos 6:6). God told the priests of Judaism, “If ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name...then will I send the curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings; yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart” (Mal. 2:2).

Lay it to heart! That means truly respect God; take Him seriously. The priests had offered polluted bread on the altar (1:7); offered blind and lame animals as sacrifice (1:8). They said of the worship, “What a weariness it is!” (1:13-14). To make this current, they said, “Do we have to go to worship?” “How much do we have to do, or give?” “Do it any old way, just get it over with; we want to go home to the TV.” And to top it off, when rebuked, they acted so innocent and said, “When did we ever do that?”

“Oh that there were one among you that would shut the doors, that ye might not kindle fire on mine altar in vain” (1:10). Better to close up shop - call it off - than to play at worship, and not “lay it to heart.”

- by Robert F. Turner

Memorizing Scripture

It was Mr. Powell’s sixth grade class, and the plan was for a special celebration of Lincoln’s birthday. I was tall and skinny, and with a stove pipe hat made of construction paper and a fake black beard, I made a pretty fair ‘Abe Lincoln’. My assignment was to memorize the Gettysburg Address and recite it before the whole student body. I can still remember how hard it was to memorize that speech. And the stage fright – WOW!

For some folks memorizing things is a real challenge - for others, it comes easier. But for us all, it requires special effort and commitment. This is certainly true when it comes to memorizing Scripture. But the benefits are real and the need is critical. All Christians need to have important passages of God’s Word committed to memory.

It is impossible to imagine a more important document that we could endeavor to learn by heart. The Bible contains God’s complete revelation to man (2 Timothy 3:16,17) and contains everything we need for “life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3). It is the only way we can know the mind and will of the Eternal Creator (1 Corinthians 2:9-13). For these reasons this inspired message should be our “delight” (Psalm 1:2) and “the joy and rejoicing of our heart” (Jeremiah 15:16).

It is worth noting that God has always expected – even commanded – that His people commit His Word to memory. Moses instructed the Israelites to “lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul” (Deuteronomy 11:18). That sounds like memorizing, does it not? Similarly, Paul wrote that we ought to “let the word of Christ dwell in you” (Colossians 3:16).

Of course, our motivation for memorizing needs to be correct. In the early 1900’s a young Russian boy named Nikki won prizes at the Russia Orthodox church in his home village of Kalonovka. He even received special recognition for memorizing and reciting the complete texts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. But his incentive was for the prizes and acknowledgement, not for the real sake of learning and applying the Scriptures to his daily life. Oh, by the way, we know that young Nikki better for his later activities as the Communist ruler Nikita Khrushchev (*Parade Magazine*, 2/11/62).

As was mentioned earlier, the benefits of memorizing Scripture are many and significant. For instance, it serves as a principle resource for resisting temptation and sin. The Psalmist asked: "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" In other words, how is a young person going to 'stay on the strait and narrow'? He continues with the answer: "by taking heed thereto according to thy word . . . Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:9-11). Hiding the Word in your heart? Certainly sounds like memorization! Of course, we have the perfect example of Jesus who resisted each of Satan's temptations by quoting Scripture (Matthew 4:3-10).

Furthermore, knowing and being able to recite Scripture will help us make the difficult decisions that face us on a regular basis. His Word is "a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path" (Psalm 119:105), but we are 'left in the dark' unless we have it committed to ready recall. The stress and hardships of daily life are eased by remembering and applying His truth in all of our circumstances. Again in the Psalms we read: "Remember the word to Thy servant, in which Thou hast made me hope. This is my comfort in my affliction, that Thy word has revived me" (119:49,50). Do you see it? Hope, comfort in affliction, revival – all coming from the Word.

Ranking high on the list of advantages we gain by memorizing Scripture is the courage we gain to share His truth with others. Christians are often too timid and reserved when it comes to talking to others. This timidity can be directly linked to the fear that we might be asked questions that we can not answer. But, if we have worked hard to commit important sections of the Bible to memory, this fear is removed. With an arsenal of memorized Scripture, we stand "ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15), and we are "set for the defense of the gospel" (Philippians 1:17).

The story is told of an old preacher who was approached by a young admirer: "Sir, I'd give half my life to know the Bible like you do!" The old preacher replied: "Well, son, that's about what it's taken - about half my life." If you really want to know your Bible well, and be able to recall and recite multiple passages of Scripture, you should start now to implement a specific plan to memorize God's Word. You will not be sorry that you did.

- by Greg Gwin