

Scripture Memory Method

In my June prayer letter, I wrote about my life-long hobby of memorizing the Scriptures and my lifelong commitment to immerse myself in the Scriptures. At the end of that letter I mentioned that I use a simple and yet transformational Scripture memory method that I developed and have been using for many years. Since then, many of you have asked me to share that method with you. So here goes.

This method is very simple and yet very powerful. If you use the brute force method, it takes lots of time and energy to memorize, and then even more energy to retain what you memorize. And thus you can never envision yourself memorizing books of the Bible. However, if you break down the steps for memorization and develop a more energy-conserving, efficient method, then you can really memorize chapters and books of the Bible. Actually with this method you *devote far more time to reading, studying, and meditating on the Scripture* rather than just memorizing. **The real purpose of this method is to immerse yourself in the Scriptures.**

I developed this method in Indonesia while I was training my Indonesian disciples. I call it the PHD method. **PHD** stands for “**P**embacaan **H**uruf **D**epan” in Indonesian. Literally it means “First-Letter Reading Method.” I used to tell my disciples that if they commit to memorizing books of the Bible, this is the real PhD for them. ☺



Here's how the process goes:

1. You write the first letter of each word in a given verse. For example, John 3:16 looks like this: **F Gsltw, t HgHobS, t wbiH snp, b hel.** (I'm sure you can read the verse without looking at the Bible, since you know this verse by heart. But let's assume for a moment that you are learning a new verse.) You'll notice that I create space between certain sections of the verse. This represents a quick analysis of grammar and other points of the verse. I always put in all the punctuation marks.
2. These first letters serve as a trigger for memory. So you are not memorizing the first letters, but you are actually saying the verse and using the first letters as memory trigger helps. You are *focusing your energy on reading, studying, and meditating on the verse.*
3. As you write each phrase, say it out loud and repeat a few times. And continue adding new phrases. You will be able to say the verse just looking at the first letters. Pretty soon you don't need to go back to the Bible, but will be able to review the verse just from the first letters. At this point you are already 80 percent on your way to fully memorizing the verse. *Keep focusing your energy on reading, studying, and meditating on the verse.*
4. The next step is to write the first letter of each phrase of the verse. So John 3:16 looks like this: **Fttb.** Do you see it? **Fttb** are the first letters of the four phrases beginning with the words **For ... , that ... , that ... , but ...** Then you review the verse from the first letter of each phrase. If you get stuck, then you go back to the first letter of each word. If you are able to quote the verse fluently just looking at the first letter of each phrase, then you are 95% on your way to fully memorizing the verse.

5. The final step is to write the first letter of each sentence. Some verses have multiple sentences. In some cases, one sentence covers multiple verses, as in Pauline epistles. John 3:16 has one sentence. So the letter **F** stands for the verse.
6. Do you see how a typical chapter of the Bible can be reduced into 20-30 different letters, representing the first letters of each sentence in the chapter? If you are able to say the whole chapter just looking at the first letter of each sentence, then you are 98 percent on your way to fully memorizing the chapter.
7. Then you mobilize the final 2 percent of your energy to fully commit the chapter to memory. By then you have *invested your energy on reading, studying, and meditating on the verse* so much that you can almost picture the flow of the whole chapter in your mind.
8. Whenever you need to review the verses, you go back to the first letter of each word and say the verses out loud. *Keep focusing your energy on reading, studying, and meditating on the verses.* That will often be enough to keep the verses fresh in your mind.
9. My purpose in memorizing the books of the Bible is not necessarily to quote them verbatim in public, although that happens a lot in my ministry. **My main purpose is to saturate my mind and immerse my thinking in the Scriptures, so that the truths of the Scriptures intuitively govern my priorities, decision-making process, and my whole life and ministry.**

Here is a short and simple example of a whole chapter of Psalm 23 written out for you.

(Bible) Psalm 23: 1 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, 3 he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6 Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

(PHD first letter of each word) P23:1 TLims, lsnbiw. 2 Hmmlld igp, hlm bqw, 3 hrms. Hgm ipor fhns. 4 Etlw ttvotsod, lwfne, fyawm; yr&ys, tcm. 5 Ypatbm itpome. Yamhwo; mco. 6 Sg&l wfm atdoml, & lwd ithotLf.

(PHD first letter of each phrase) P23:1-6 TI. Hhh. H. Elf;yt. Y.Y;m. S&.

(PHD first letter of each sentence) P23:1-6 THH EYS.

There it is. I hope this is helpful. Give it a try. If you have more questions, let me know. God's richest blessings to you as you embark on this exciting journey of Scripture memory.

Blessings,

