



# TRUTH MATTERS

A Newsletter Discussing Matters Related To Truth Because Truth Matters

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## Cash or Chocolate?

### *Incentives for Scripture Memory*

'Tis the season for new beginnings and fresh starts. It's the New Year. "I resolve to read the Bible through this year!" Sound familiar? I have another great idea for a New Year's resolution: memorize one verse a week with the rest of the church. I want to call us to a church-wide Scripture memory program again this year just like we have done every year. Will you join us?

What is it that will keep you from memorizing Scripture this year?

- Are you too old?
- Does your memory not work like it used to work?
- Do you have a hard time remembering your own phone number; let alone a Scripture verse and reference?

What would it take to get you to memorize Scripture this year? Every Sunday School teacher knows what it takes to get children to memorize Scripture – incentive! That's right! Every kid under the age of 11 will memorize a verse a week for his Sunday School teacher just as long as he gets that piece of candy, that prize, that reward. I know good and well, that a Hershey's candy bar would not do the trick for you adults; but what if I said that each Sunday I would give you a clean crisp new 100 dollar bill just for memorizing your memory verse? Would you do it? Of course you would! There is not an adult in this church who would not jump through that hoop to get \$100 a week.

What you need in order to set your mind to the task of memorizing God's word is incentive. Sadly, the Bible blows our worldly incentives out of the water. Listen to the psalmist as he says that the Word of God is

"more to be desired... than gold, even much fine gold (money); sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb (candy)" (Ps. 19:10). There is something that makes the Bible intrinsically more pleasant than candy and more valuable than money.

- *How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!* (Psalm 119:103)
- *The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces.* (Psalm 119:72)
- *Therefore I love your commandments above gold, above fine gold.* (Psalm 119:127)
- *Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold.* (Proverbs 8:10)

The words of the Bible, themselves, are more valuable than money and sweeter than candy. What should we do then? If the Bible itself is more to be desired than silver, gold and the sweetest morsels of candy, what incentive do we need for taking it unto ourselves and eating it? In other words, candy and money won't do for incentives once we realize that the Bible is greater and sweeter than these.

When I was a boy, I was known for hoarding candy. Anytime I was given candy, I would stash it away somewhere in my room. It was always there when I needed a sugar fix. As I grew older I would do the same with my money. It was always there when I needed it. What is the point? Things that are precious to us get stashed away as treasure.

Is it any wonder then that the psalmist says, "I have stored up (treasured) your word in my heart, that I

might not sin against you” (Ps. 119:11). He stores it up like a treasure. It will be there when he needs it.

But needs it for what? His answer is that the Word of God stored up in one’s heart becomes a storehouse of useful weapons that help keep one from sin. To any believer who loves God and the truth, this should be reason enough for storing up the Word of God in our hearts – it keeps us from sin.

As believers we are to do everything for the glory of God. But did it ever occur to you that the opposite of doing something for God’s glory is to do something sinful? Sin is the opposite of God’s glory. Therefore, the psalmist says that storing up the Word in our hearts as a treasure is what makes it possible to not sin. Or to say it positively: storing up the Word in our hearts is what makes it possible to live for God’s glory.

We know that the Word of God is useful in meeting the challenges of the devil. But there is another use of Scripture memory that comes from one of the other psalms we have alluded to. What if you had a weapon that told you when, where and how the devil would come to you? What if you had a tool in your arsenal that actually warned you of the enemies attack? What if you had a radar detector that warned you of an onslaught? You do – if you memorize Scripture. Listen:

More to be desired are they [the Word of God] than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, *by them is your servant warned*; in keeping them there is great reward (Psalm 19:10-11, emphasis added).

Do you see the great incentive in this passage? There is great reward in treasuring up Scripture in your heart. But the reward is not chocolate or cash; it is the built-in detection system that warns you and keeps you from sinning. The ultimate joy comes to your life when you live for God’s glory. Scripture memory becomes the detection system that keeps you from sinning.

### ***Arsenal Passages***

According to Webster’s Dictionary, an *arsenal* is “a storehouse or source of supply for arms, ammunition, or other military equipment.” The Psalmist sang, “I

have stored [lit. “treasured”] up your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11, ESV). Thus, one of the key spiritual disciplines that every Christian must undertake is the routine memorization and meditation of Scripture.

This year, our ***Arsenal Passages*** will be centered around the theme of Christ’s death. John Piper wrote a book last year to coincide with Mel Gibson’s movie, *The Passion of the Christ*. Piper’s book lists 50 reasons Christ died. In each chapter he gives one to three passages that give a reason as to why Christ died. We will take these fifty reasons and focus on them this year through Scripture memory.

If you would like to purchase a set of Arsenal Passages on cards, they will be made available for a small fee to help cover the cost of producing them\*. Each week we will state a reason for Christ’s death and then memorize one to three passages that state that reason in the words of Scripture. My challenge is that every one of you commit to memorizing one verse a week. Others may do all of them; but we all must treasure up God’s Word.

### ***Strategy***

The deacons and I have noticed that by holding ourselves accountable every Sunday morning during our prayer time, we are more likely to memorize. For this reason, I would suggest that each Growth Group take some time to hold each other accountable for the week’s memory verse. If you know that someone will ask, you will feel the pressure. I will let you grapple in your own heart as to whether you do it as a man-pleaser or a God-glorifier.

### ***Incentive***

I offer you this incentive for Scripture memory: The words themselves are sweeter than honey; more costly than gold and by them you will be warned and kept from sinning. That is, you will be more likely to live for God’s glory!

Pastor Powers

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