

Getting a Grip on the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God

Ephesians 6:13-17

A sword used for defense against the attacks of the enemy – and a sword to attack to carry out and advance the gospel.

Genesis 3

The very first thing that the enemy of ours did was to attack the Word of God. Satan began from the garden casting doubt in the mind and heart of man about the reliability and authority of God's Word.

Who do you listen to? God's Word or the traditions of man? What is the final authority in your life?

MAT 15:6 you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition.

The Bible is God's Word

PRO 2:1-5 My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.

Convictions:

Jesus amazed those who heard Him speak because he spoke with conviction and as one having authority.

Mark 1:22 The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.

- **Deep conviction**– speaks of the idea of a complete assurance, a fixed or strong belief. The idea of being completely convinced!
- **Our convictions are the things we believe to be true and which move us to live out our lives in a certain way.**
- **For the Christian, our convictions must come from God's Word. But not only that, we must hold convictions about God's Word.**

#1 We must be absolutely convinced the Bible is God's Word - that what Scripture says, God says! Therefore Scripture is the final authority for our lives.

What does the Bible say about itself?

#2 We need to approach the Bible every day with an attitude of deep humility, recognizing that our understanding of the Bible is at best incomplete and sometimes inaccurate.

"Truth seldom lies in extremes

Isaiah 55:9 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

#3 Dependence on the Holy Spirit. Along with an attitude of humility we also need an attitude of dependence on the Holy Spirit to teach us.

John 16:13 "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

#4 Diligence. As I depend on God I must approach the Scriptures with an attitude of diligence.

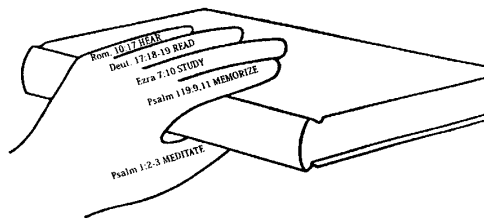
2Tim 2:15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

#5 I must approach the Word of God with a Responsive Heart.

Col. 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

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The Word: The Hand Illustration



The "Word Hand" shows us the five methods of learning from the Bible. Each of these methods is important.

Hearing: Hearing the Word from godly pastors and teachers provides us insight into others' study of the Scriptures as well as stimulating our own appetites for the Word.

Reading: Reading the Bible gives us an overall picture of God's Word. Many find helpful a daily reading program which takes them systematically through the Bible.

Studying: Studying the Scriptures leads us into personal discoveries of God's truths. Writing down these discoveries helps us organize and remember them better.

Memorizing: Memorizing God's Word enables us to use the sword of the Spirit to overcome Satan and temptations ... to have it readily available for witnessing or helping others with a "word in season."

Meditation: Meditation is the thumb of the Word Hand, for it is used in conjunction with each of the other four methods. Only as we meditate on God's Word-thinking of its meaning and application to our lives-will we discover its transforming power at work in us.

	COMMANDED	COMMANDED	BLESSING
Hear	Ezekiel 3:10	Jeremiah 22:29	Luke 11:28
Read	Nehemiah 8:8	1 Timothy 4:13	Revelation 1:3
Study	2 Timothy 3:16-17	2 Timothy 2:15	Acts 17:11
Memorize	Psalm 119:11	Deuteronomy 6:6	Psalm 40:8
Meditate	Psalm 1:2-3	Joshua 1:8	1 Timothy 4:15

THE WORD OF GOD-HEARING

"So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain. Indeed you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them." (Ezekiel 33:31-32)

The basic problem in listening to a sermon improperly involves the heart. Often the heart isn't eager to receive spiritual things. It puts up resistance to the Word of truth because it is not willing to obey the exhortations that come from God. This is why God says, "Receive into your heart all My words that I speak to you, and hear with your ears" (Ezekiel 3:10).

Isn't that the wrong order? Don't we hear something first, then act on the information? Not in spiritual matters-because the heart must first be prepared to receive. Only then will it be able to hear. That is the main trouble with the average listener. His heart is not prepared to hear the Word of God.

Think back. Can you recall a time when God really spoke to your heart during a message? Now think again. Wasn't your heart unusually prepared on that day through some circumstance or experience to receive that particular message?

Have you ever heard of people who grew up in a good church but claim that they never truly heard the gospel in that church? No doubt the essentials of the gospel were preached, but the message just didn't penetrate. Why? Basically because the heart wasn't prepared.

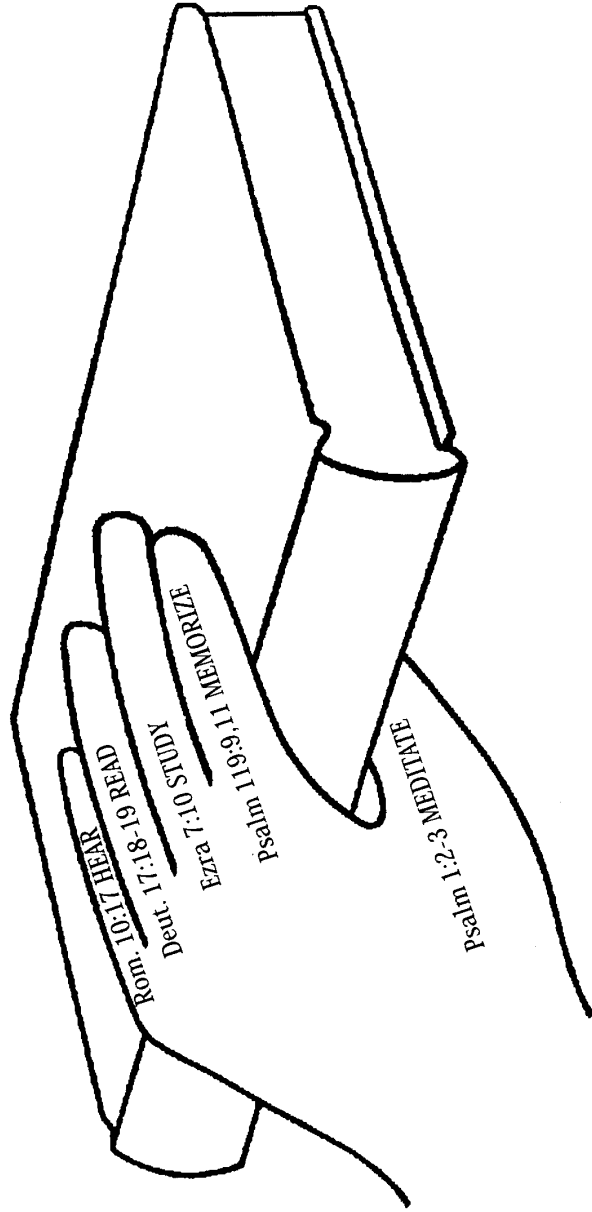
Our first hearing aid: Ask God to open your heart to the message. Ask God to speak to you through your pastor. If God is truly speaking, then we should listen well.

The second hearing aid: Take a pen and notebook with you when you go to church or to a conference meeting so that you can record the highlights of the message. -Roy Robertson

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The Word:





Ephesians 6 Talks about putting on the Armor of God;

Ephesians 6:13-17

Vs. 17 calls the Scriptures, the Sword of the Spirit.

A sword used for defense against the attacks of the enemy – and a sword to attack to carry out and advance the gospel.

Here is a motivating video clip:

Turn to Genesis 3

The very first thing that the enemy of ours did was to attack the Word of God. Satan began from the garden casting doubt in the mind and heart of man about the reliability and authority of God's Word.

Eve soon followed in distorting the Word. We often distort the Word by adding to it.

Eve was deceived and believed the lie, that God's Word was not authoritative, that God did not tell the truth and that God in fact had tried to deceive man.

Who do you listen to? God's Word or the traditions of man? What is the final authority in your life?

MAT 15:6 *you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition.*

The Bible is God's Word

Dawson Trotman, the founder of The Navigators and referred to by some as the apostle of discipleship was a man steeped in the Scriptures. To those who knew him and those who have read the two biographies of this man of vision and faith, it was evident that his consuming passion was the Word of God and getting it into the hearts and lives of believers everywhere. He had an ever growing heart for the world and desired to raise up men and women who would take the gospel to the farthest corners of the globe.

SLIDE

One of Dawson's favorite passages was Proverbs 2:1-5, Dig, dig! Study, study! Search, search! God's Word has all the answers we need for what we believe, for guidance and conduct.

Proverbs 2:1-5

PRO 2:1-5 My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.

SLIDE

Convictions:

Jesus amazed those who heard Him speak because he spoke with conviction and as one having authority.

Mark 1:22 The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.

LUK 4:32 They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority.

Why did Jesus speak with conviction, why did his messages have authority? Because His Words were God's Words! And this will be true for the disciple's of Jesus. When we preach the Word of God and believe it is the Word of God we will speak with conviction and with authority.

1 Thess. 1:4-5 For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.

Paul's message was one which came from a deep conviction - from something he firmly believed.

V.1:5 The gospel came "with power;" it had a powerful effect on the Thessalonians. Whenever the Bible is heard and obeyed, lives are changed! Christianity is more than a collection of interesting facts; it is the power of God to every one who believes. What has God's power done in your life since you first believed?

Paul wrote, "You know how we lived among you for your sake." The Thessalonians could see that what Paul, Silas, and Timothy were preaching was true because these men lived it. Does your life confirm or contradict what you say you believe? Paul's lifestyle was a reflection of his beliefs, of a deep conviction.

- **Deep conviction— speaks of the idea of a complete assurance, a fixed or strong belief. The idea of being completely convinced!**
- **Our convictions are the things we believe to be true and which move us to live out our lives in a certain way.**
- **For the Christian, our convictions must come from God's Word. But not only that, we must hold convictions about God's Word.**

Proverbs speaks of wisdom and understanding. Wisdom comes in two ways: it is a God-given gift and also the result of an energetic search. Wisdom's starting point is God and his revealed Word, the source of "knowledge and understanding" (2:6). In that sense, wisdom is His gift to us. But He gives it only to those who earnestly seek it. But because God's wisdom is hidden from the rebellious and foolish, it takes effort to find it and use it. The pathway to wisdom is strenuous. When we are on the path, we discover that true wisdom is God's and that he will guide us and reward our sincere and persistent search.

PRO 2:1 My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you,

Proverbs 2:1 begins **IF** you accept my teachings. **IF** — **the first conviction we must have is one on how we view the Scriptures.**

SLIDE Conviction #1

#1 We must be absolutely convinced the Bible is God's Word - that what Scripture says, God says! Therefore Scripture is the final authority for our lives.

We need to approach the Word of God with the deep settled conviction that it accurately expresses the mind of God and the will of God as to how we are to live. We need no other source.

Without a firm and solid conviction that the Bible is the Word of God, then we are in very troubled waters. If the Bible is not the complete, authoritative Word of God, then there is no absolute moral truth and we are left to our own opinions.

What does the Bible say about itself?

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed

2Pet.1:21 Peter tells us that "men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit"

Acts 1:16 tells us that "the Holy Spirit spoke through the mouth of David"

2Pet. 3:15-16 **Paul's writings are called scripture by Peter the apostle**

We may not understand how the Holy Spirit moved upon the minds of those who wrote the Scriptures, or how He spoke through the mouths of men like David and Moses so that what they said or wrote was exactly what God wanted them to say, but this is what the Bible declares.

John 17:7 *Sanctify them in truth, Thy Word is Truth!*

2TI 4:3-4 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.

But it is not enough for us to believe the Bible is true. We also need to strive to understand what the Bible teaches and how our lives should be changed by it. As best as we can we need to strive to seek out, understand and apply the truths of the Bible.

That is exactly what is communicated in Proverbs 2:1-5

PRO 2:1-2 My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding,

We are convinced we need to come to the Scriptures because they are the Words of God but in order to develop convictions from the Word our attitude must be humble.

SLIDE Conviction #2

#2 We need to approach the Bible every day with an attitude of deep humility, recognizing that our understanding of the Bible is at best incomplete and sometimes inaccurate.

We must hold to what the Bible says. In humility we must recognize that no Christian or no group of Christians understand all that the Bible has to say. No one understands everything!

“Truth seldom lies in extremes.” Daws stressed **balance** of truth. He would draw a figure of a man on a blackboard. Then Daws would take a hand or a foot or a head and make it huge. It would become a monstrosity. Ugly. It was no longer in balance with the truth. We need to discern the *truth* that God has chosen to reveal to us. As finite creatures, we are limited in our ability to grasp the mind of God.

Isaiah 55:9 “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

The apostle Paul also struggled with because his human mind was unable to fully understand God’s Word. But he was still committed to find out what he could. The same should be true for every believer. After writing of some of these inscrutable concepts, Paul’s heart and mind were filled with the majesty of God.

Romans 11:33-36 Oh, the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgements, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Or who has ever given to God, that God should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be all the glory forever! Amen.

Illus.: Earth is round! Earth is flat! There once major controversy...

There are things which we have believed for years because that is what we have been taught, but later discovered are not true at all. This also happens to Christians. There are some things we have heard or been taught that the Bible says. But when we actually read the Bible and study the Bible we discover something different.

e.g., Mary the mother of Jesus was a virgin, prayer Blessed Mary ever Virgin. I was shocked when I learned that Jesus had brothers!

The more I study, the more I learn and understand Scripture, the more I see how little I understand of all that God has revealed to us in the Bible. So as I approach the Bible, I approach it with the firm deep conviction that the Bible is God’s Word and that it is authoritative. It has authority over my life.

If the Bible says something different than what I have always thought or believed, then I must change what I believe.

We learn from many sources. We learn from our families, from tradition and from culture. We learn from elders and from school. We learn from books and from teachers. We learn from church meetings and from our own study.

There will be times when we will be confronted with something that is different than what we have always believed. Different from what our culture or tradition has told us or different from messages we

have always heard and believed. When those times come we must go to the bible. We must study it for ourselves and if we find that the Bible does say something different than what we have believed, we must be willing to change our way of thinking.

Psalm 119:33 Teach me O Lord, to follow your decrees; then I will keep them to the end.

So, I must approach the Bible with an attitude of humility.

SLIDE Conviction #3

#3 Dependence on the Holy Spirit. Along with an attitude of humility we also need an attitude of dependence on the Holy Spirit to teach us.

v.3 says: if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding,

Calling out and crying out gives the idea of desperation. It gives the picture of a mother who has lost here little two year old. She cannot find him, she searches around her house and then to the neighbors but he can not be found. Then in desperation she cries out, Michael, where are you Michael, Michael.

The woman is desperate as she searches for her precious child. We must have the same sense of desperateness in our desire to know God's Word. We should call out to God for understanding, we should cry for insight so that we might depend on the Holy Spirit to teach us and guide us into truth.

Deut. 32:45-47 But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

Spirit of the Word crushed by legalism Mat 5:17-19

We cry out and search and store up and apply our hearts so that we might develop convictions, firm beliefs that are based on the Bible.

SLIDE Conviction #4

#4 Diligence. As I depend on God I must approach the Scriptures with an attitude of diligence.

Proverbs 2:4 and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure,

This is exactly the opposite of what the Holy Spirit moved Solomon to write

Proverbs 1:30 says: since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke.

The practice of diligent study is expressed by the phrases *applying your heart to understanding*, and *if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure*. The thought of searching the Scriptures with the same intensity as when searching for hidden treasure. This suggests putting a value on the discovering of truth in God's Word.

Proverbs 7:2 Guard my teachings as the apple of your eye"

We must ask ourselves, What value do we place upon the Word of God? Do we search it as if we were seeking for hidden treasure?

2Tim 2:15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

Timothy is exhorted to be diligent, to do your very best, to make every effort, to do your utmost.

It speaks of a workman who has trained himself to be skilled in the study and interpretation of the Scriptures.

correctly handling — literally says rightly dividing the NASB says handling accurately.

e.g., Jehovah Witnesses changed the Bible, Colossians 1:15-18 “other” added 7 times.

The man or woman of God who handles the word of God accurately does not change, pervert, twist, or distort the Scriptures. He does not take it out of context nor does he use it for a wrong purpose.

This means that you and I will humbly, prayerfully and diligently study and interpret the Word of God. It means we will apply it to our lives, to our culture, to our jobs, to our homes and to our church. In doing so we will not need to be ashamed when we face God.

Proverbs 2:4-5 and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.

Our ultimate objective in getting into the Scriptures is to know God and order our lives in a way that pleases Him.

SLIDE Conviction #5

#5 I must approach the Word of God with a Responsive Heart.

Isaiah 30:21 Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it.”

We need to train ourselves to hear God’s voice, to be able to discern His plan, and to obey. The Israelites were a disobedient generation. Even though they heard the voice of God through the prophets, and were given His written Word and desires in the Law, they failed to obey.

How does God speak to us today? The Scripture is clear that God’s voice is heard in the flow of the Bible message. The voice of God speaking to His children is an inner voice, the voice of the Holy Spirit as we interact with His written Word. As we meditate upon portions of Scripture the Holy Spirit carries out His responsibility to illumine or to give us understanding (John 16:12-15). He uses the Word to teach, rebuke, correct, and train us in righteousness.

God’s speaks to us through His written Word. The Holy Spirit speaks through the Word to me with His answer to my most pressing need. The Christian gets into the Word and the Holy Spirit actively applies the truth of the Scriptures to our individual circumstances. He Himself is the voice of the living God. God may use a friend, or may use circumstances to teach us a lesson, but always the voice is heard within the flow of the Scriptures. That is why we must grasp hold of the Bible. The Spirit of God and the Word of God work hand-in-hand to transform us into the image of the Son of God...to the Glory of God.

Col. 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

Romans 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

The men and women who have grown most in spiritual maturity and who have accomplished the most for His glory are those who have been committed to two things—consistent, frequent, and long times in the Word of God and in Prayer. Without this we simply cannot stand firm in the faith, nor experience God day by day as we are meant to do. We must make it a point to spend much time in the Scriptures.

It is the Spirit of God working with the Word of God that brings communication with God.

Getting the Word into your Life : The Hand Illustration

The Hand Illustration

If we really want to grasp something securely, we use all the fingers of our hand. Likewise if we want to get a firm grasp of the Word of God, we should use all the basic ways available to us.

In the Hand Illustration, the five methods of getting a mature knowledge of God's Word are compared to the five fingers of one's hand.

If you use only one or two of these methods, such as sitting in church and hearing sermons from the preacher, it is like trying to retain a hold on the Book with only one or two fingers. This gives a very weak grip so that Satan can snatch the Word from us. However, if you use all these methods you will get a good hold of God's truth in such a way that Satan or false doctrines cannot make you lose your grip on God's Word.

HEARING

Ezekiel 33:31,32 gives the condition of the church in rebellion as those who listen to the preaching in the same way as they would listen to music. They go just for entertainment. They pat the preacher on the back and tell him it was a fine message but do not heed the instruction given. God condemns such an attitude. He promises that He will give to His people pastors and teachers who will be able to feed them out of the Word of God (*Jeremiah 3:15*).

We strongly recommend that you seek out a church where the preaching of God's Word can feed your soul. God has given such pastors to the church and it is His desire that you might be fed under them.

John 8:47 gives us an example of people who heard Jesus preach, yet did not hear what He said. Hearing does not merely mean listening to sounds but understanding the message.

Notice Ezekiel 3:10. We should first receive the Word in our heart and then hear it with our ears.

When you go to church unprepared in heart to receive the message, you will get little out of it; but if your heart is right, God can speak to you and give you a great blessing. Many people sit under the sound of the Gospel for months, and even years, yet never hear the message because of hardened, rebellious hearts. So, our prayer for you is to open your heart to receive God's message from God's messenger (*Haggai 1:13*).

READING

Just as sitting under the sound of the Gospel is not necessarily hearing it, so the mere scanning through the pages

of the Word is not necessarily reading it. You should read slowly and carefully, praying that the Lord will open the meaning of the Word to you. A good thing to do is to pray before reading the Word of God (*Psalms 119:18*).

It is important to read regularly. 1 Timothy 4:13 says, "Give attention to reading." We recommend that you read through the book of John at least twice and then go on to read the New Testament before delving into any of the Old Testament.

STUDYING

There is a difference between reading and studying. "Thoughts disentangle themselves passing through the lips and pencil tips." When we study God's Word, we should have a pen and a piece of paper in our hands. This will help us to better express our thoughts of the Word. We urge you to have a systematic program for Bible study. You build up yourself in the Word as you study the Bible.

MEMORIZING

Memorizing God's Word is a vital key in helping us overcome sin in our lives. Examine the temptation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Even our Savior did not meet Satan with His own understanding. He quoted from the Old Testament to come out victorious over Satan (*Matthew 4:4,7 and 10*). The Lord used a different verse of Scripture to meet each particular temptation of Satan.

Ephesians 6:16 says, "*Take the shield of faith that you may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*" Satan attacks in many ways, and to be victorious, the Christian must be equipped with much Scripture.

When Satan tempts us, the chances are that we will not have our Bibles in our hands. The only thing we will have from God's Word with which to fight Satan is what we can remember from the Bible. To be forewarned is to be forearmed, and how important it is to store up God's Word ahead of time so as to meet the temptations when they come. The greatest commandment in all the Scripture is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and strength (*Deuteronomy 6:5*).

Deuteronomy 6:6 commands us to lay up these words in our hearts. **To know Christ is to love Him.** As we come to know and possess the Word of God in our very lives and hearts, we will then come into that intimate relationship with Christ. This will enable us to love Him with all our soul, heart and strength.

Thus, memorizing God's Word helps us overcome sin and to know Him more intimately. Here are 6 more benefits:

1. It is a help in Bible study.
2. It is a help in soul winning. Example: It is a dark night and you are riding with someone in a car and talking about the Lord. You could not do this unless you have memorized Scripture.
3. It helps us to make daily decisions in life.
4. Those we seek to help will have confidence in us.
5. It is a benefit in preaching.
6. It develops your memory.

MEDITATION

When we combine meditation with the other methods of intake of God's Word, rich blessings will follow. With

the thumb we grasp firmly whatever we hold. So we hear and meditate on what we hear; we read and meditate on what we have read, etc. Meditating on God's word is like a cow chewing the cud. Through meditation we take in spiritual food for our spirits.

How to meditate:

1. Memorize a short portion of Scripture (for example: Matthew 4:4). "Man does not live on bread alone...."
2. Quote this passage as a prayer: "Lord, I live not on bread alone, but on every word that comes from Your mouth."
3. Personalize it by inserting your name in it: "Louis does not live on bread alone...."
4. Repeat it several times, emphasizing different words in the passage:
 - "*Man* does not live on bread alone...." (all men)
 - "Man *does not* live on bread alone...." (absolutely does not)
 - "Man does not *live* on bread alone...." (physical vs. spiritual life)

God commands His blessing (*Psalms 1:2,3; Joshua 1:8*) on the person who meditates on His Word day and night. When we meditate on His Word, we abide in His Word and the Lord promises to make our lives fruitful (*John 15:7,8*). So hearing, reading, studying, and memorizing, plus meditation, are the means whereby we can abide in Christ through His Word.