

Scripture Memorization – A Great Way to Plant and Water

My first real exposure to Scripture memory was when my eldest daughter was invited to attend AWANA Cubbies. I observed my children benefit from memorizing God's Word and not too many years later I was a Sparks leader working in my own books. Fast forward about 10 years and I was driving home with the same daughter from our first IFCA quiz practice. We had just been told that she would memorize the entire book of James and most of 1st Peter, something that we both agreed was impossible...except, we had also been told, the previous year quizzers had memorized a large portion of Romans.

Since 1999, I have seen lives impacted and, in some cases, completely transformed through the ministry of Bible Quizzing. These changes are a result, not of quizzing, but of the Spirit of God working in quizzers' lives. *"I planted, Apollos watered, but **God gave the increase.**"* (1 Cor 3:6) I can think of students who were told they could never "do it", not only succeed but also, quote the entire material with no helps. I have seen other students who were getting C's and D's in school start to get B's and even some A's. Students with learning disabilities find that they learn better. One mother told me, *"I am convinced that Bible quizzing, getting daily into God's Word, memorization, being required to think backwards and deductively reason to answer questions, has contributed to her success in life, school and quizzing."* I have also seen coaches, like myself, mature and grow as they study and memorize the Word of God. These things happen when people meditate on God's Word and make it a priority in their lives. In 1 Cor 3:1-4, Paul chastises the Corinthian believers because they are not ready to receive solid food. Memorizing Scripture, whether through AWANA, Bible Quizzing, or some other ministry is a great way to receive solid food.

The IFCA Bible quizzing ministry exists as a means to encourage students (and adults) to study God's Word in depth and to commit large portions of Scripture to memory. We believe the hiding of God's Word in the heart together with an intellectual grasp of the Scripture provides a platform for flourishing spiritual growth in our youth. What is it about Scripture memorization that makes it so effective?

- God's Word is powerful (Heb 4:12)
- God's Word does not return void (Isa 55:11)
- God blesses those who meditate on His Word (Psalm 1)
- Quizzers learn perseverance (2 Tim 3:10)
- Exercising our brains actually helps them to function better

It is clear that committing God's Word to memory has many benefits. For example, this year, after studying 1 Cor 1-6, 11-13 and 15, students will have had the opportunity to learn to trust the Wisdom of God rather than the wisdom of this world. They will know the importance of building their lives on the foundation of Jesus Christ and

that what they do with their lives is important and will be "tested by fire". They will know what God thinks about sexual immorality, law suits, the roles of men and women, spiritual gifts and much more. They will also have heard the gospel message clearly presented and should know how to share it with others. Of course, there are other ways that students could learn these things, so what makes Bible Quizzing such an effective method of teaching?

- To quiz you must memorize and memorizing means meditating.
- Quizzing requires that students understand what they memorize.
- Students are encouraged by coaches and each other to stick with it.
- The bar is set very high and most students rise to the challenge.
- God created a competitive spirit within most people and quizzing nurtures that spirit.
- Quizzing is fun and winning is fun. There is generally a correlation between how much you memorize and how well you quiz.

You might even say that quizzing is the method we use to "trick students into memorizing God's Word". If it was not for the quizzing, most would not do the memorizing. Occasionally, people wonder if quizzing somehow diminishes God's Word. Whether somehow the competition diminishes or trivializes God's Holy Word. I do not believe that is true. Let me quote from the quizzing rules, *"Competition is a God-given human endeavor by which we seek to excel. Quiz officials and most importantly coaches, must always be reinforcing the basic premise that for Christians, the ultimate goal of competition is not to win. As the Scripture so aptly uses the picture of competition, it is to serve as an impetus for us to prepare and perform to the best of our God-given abilities to the glory of Christ. (1 Cor. 9:24-27; Gal. 2:2; Phil. 3:14; II Tim. 4:7; Heb. 12:1-2)." And finally, "Remember competition does not create bad attitudes. Competition only creates situations in which our true attitudes are revealed."* I know that for me personally God has used these situations to "refine" me and help me to grow.

In a testimonial of IFCA quizzing, Jon Rinker writes: *"Of all the things I was involved with during those years (high school), quizzing was the most exciting and rewarding. I had an inner motivation to win in quizzing so I ended up being above average in diligence in memorization and "success." While I enjoyed getting the trophies and scholarships, the memory of God's word has been far more impacting beyond the passing recognition of winning."*

Quizzing is difficult and does take a lot of time and commitment. All worthwhile endeavors do. I am the first to admit that Bible Quizzing is not for everyone, but I am convinced that **scripture memorization is!** If you are not involved in Bible Quizzing, I encourage you to either get involved or find another way to make scripture memorization a regular part of your Christian life. The IFCA Quizzing website can be found at www.ifcaquizzing.org. If you would like more information on quizzing, email me at info@ifcaquizzing.org. **- John Overton**