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INTRODUCTION

ONE MOMENT IN TIME

Your hands are sweating. Your mind is racing. You have just exhausted the last comfortable sitting position in your seat. Suddenly you realize your knees are shaking uncontrollably. Looking around, a pensive smile breaks across your face. The other six contestants are doing the very same thing! After what seems like hours of waiting, your name is finally announced as the moderator's voice blares out over the loudspeakers of the spectacular Grand Ballroom in the J. W. Marriott Hotel in Washington, D.C., where hundreds have gathered to witness the Final Competition of the first-ever National Bible Bee.

Amidst roaring applause and flashing lights, you step forward to the microphone. Your brain is spinning, reeling as it sorts through the hundreds of verses you have crammed into your head over the past six months. Psalm 145? How did that one start? Quoting it all alone at home is one thing, but with an entire crowd hanging on your every sentence, and an astute panel of judges examining your every word, watching closely for a mistake—that is quite another! And besides the

hundreds of people present here in this room, there are the countless numbers watching the live broadcast of the event over the Internet. People all over the world could very well be watching you at this very moment! Watching who? Watching you!

What if your mind goes blank? What if you cannot remember the next word, turning the nightmares you have dreaded into reality? All these thoughts race through your mind at once, making it even more difficult for you to concentrate on what the next line of the passage is. You feel as if you are suspended at the precipitous climax of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5. Your mind is whirling under the pressure, dizzy with intensity.

In vain you attempt to remember all the tips and advice you have been given. But this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity! In a few hours

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\$100,000.”

the competition will be over, and your one and only chance will be past. The winners will be decided, and for months to come you will be scrutinizing your performance during these final moments, critiquing the things you could have done better: the techniques you should have used, that one word you missed on the final passage—the one that really counted. It makes things even worse

when you realize that only one word could mean winning or losing the grand prize of \$100,000—one \$100,000 word!

All the hours and months you have spent preparing now seem hazy and far away, as if they were a dream—a dream full of suspense and anticipation, a dream culminating in this one moment in time.

That was my position. That is what I would like to tell you about in this book. How could an ordinary person like me make it to that moment? Many months and hours of quiet work and practice were represented by that one moment. To the casual observer, it might appear that a bunch of kids quoted a bunch of verses in front of a bunch of people, a few of them won a bunch of money, and that was the end of that. But what is the rest of the story? What happened in the lives of each one of those boys and girls, young ladies and young men, as they worked in preparation for the few hours that the public saw? I will never know exactly what it was like for each of them personally, but I do know that for me, the competition was a whole lot more than two days at the Marriott Hotel.

It all started far earlier, when an ordinary guy in an ordinary family learned there was going to be a Bible Bee, figured you couldn't go wrong memorizing Scripture, and decided to give it a try. Little did I know what was ahead—the difficult process of trial and error, discovering what works and what doesn't; the hours learning, changing, revising, and re-revising; and most importantly, all the techniques, principles, and insights that the Lord would teach me along the way. During this time, He drew my heart away from the prize and toward His Word, away from all the hustle and bustle of the competition and toward Himself. He remained faithful from beginning to end. He was the same in the final hours of the competition as He was back at the very beginning, when I took a deep breath and asked myself that first question: “Can I memorize 1,500 verses in six months?”

“CAN I MEMORIZE 1,500 VERSES IN SIX MONTHS?”

I am sure that many of you have asked yourselves this or a similar question at one time or another. Is it really possible? But in answering

this question, let us break it down into five smaller questions, taking one word at a time.

“Can?”

Fear can prevent us from trying. But if we are doing this for the Lord, we have nothing to fear. We can do all things through Christ Who strengthens us. (See Philippians 4:13.) It was a wonderful discovery for me to find God’s strength in what seemed to be an impossible task. I had never done anything like this before. Prior to the Bible Bee, the most I had ever memorized was four verses a week or one verse a day at the most. The Bible Bee brought memorization to a whole new level I had never even thought was possible. But giving up is never an option! Set yourself a goal, determine to give God your best, and you just might end up surprising yourself.

“I?”

Substitute your name in the place of the second word, “I.” Who are you? You might be a brave Bible Bee contestant going for the gold medal, a wise teacher or parent wishing to instill a love for God’s Word in your children, someone looking for ideas on how to make memorization easier and more fun, or maybe just a curious individual wanting to know what it is like to compete in a Bible Bee. Whoever you are, I’m sure you understand the power of committing God’s Word to heart and desire the blessings that God promises to all who seek Him first. (See Matthew 6:33.) In Chapter 1, we will explore this further as we answer that foundational question: “Why should I memorize?”

“Memorize?”

Then, building on this foundation, in Chapters 2 and 3 we will discuss “*What* should I memorize?” and “*How?*” Whether or not you succeed

or fail in Bible memorization will largely depend on *how* you memorize. This is why I am so thrilled to be able to share an exciting new approach that totally transformed the way I memorize. It takes all the work right out of it! I honestly do not think I would have been able to finish memorizing the required number of verses without using this technique. In addition to this, we also will cover a few other tips and ideas to help simplify, enrich, and speed up the whole memorization process.

“1,500 Verses?”

The amount is not really what matters. Whether it’s 15 verses or 1,500 verses, God has packed power to change lives into every single verse of the Bible, and you could get a month’s worth of meditation out of just one verse. Whatever the amount, it will still be a challenge to keep it up over time. Many people do not have much of a problem memorizing large portions of Scripture, even over a short period of time. But rarely are they able to “keep them up” on a long-term basis. It is all too easy to forget old passages, let alone continue memorizing new material. In Chapter 4 I will explain the review process I discovered that allowed me to consistently learn 60 new verses every week and keep every single one on the tip of my tongue, ready to be quoted at a moment’s notice.

“ **MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, BUT BY EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDETH OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD** ”
(MATTHEW 4:4).

“In Six Months?”

Obviously these passages will have a lasting impact on your life that will reach far beyond six months, but by setting up a schedule and adhering to it, you will be able to confidently meet your goals in time, amidst all the other plans and activities of life. I seriously doubt you

are the hermit-type who has nothing at all planned for the summer and are ready to devote every minute to memorizing. There is so much else going on in life! I know what it feels like to be rushing from deadline to deadline, looking at my to-do list every night wondering why so little got done, and then on top of that knowing I have not been spending the time with the Lord like I should. My desire is that you would be able to not just “fit it in” but rather that you would truly build Bible memory and meditation into your schedule and make them a part of your life.

Using the techniques given in Chapters 1 through 4, you will be able to quickly expand your repertoire, learning new Scriptures and adding them to your treasure store, without dropping all of your other priorities. Bible Bee contestants must remember that there are other aspects of the competition to focus on besides Bible memory. Chapter 5 will cover additional topics that those preparing for the Bible Bee may find helpful, such as how to study a book of the Bible or how to deal with nervousness. And then in the final chapter, I’ll tell you the rest of the story—the inside story that few people have heard, the story of the \$100,000 word.

ORDINARY OR EXTRAORDINARY?

Before going any further, let me give you two requirements I have come up with for reading this book. See if you qualify:

1. You must be ordinary.

There are a few memorization geniuses out there. You know, those folks with photographic memories who can just look at a page and have it memorized after a few seconds (or so I’ve heard). God bless them! But this book was not written primarily with them in mind. If you happen to be one of these people, you probably will have already

mastered many of the ideas in this book, because this is an ordinary book written by an ordinary guy for ordinary people.

2. You must be extraordinary!

This may seem like a contradiction, but if you are so ordinary that you are set on doing things the way everybody else does, then you might as well not read this book either. God is not looking merely for ordinary people. God is looking for ordinary people who are willing to let Him do extraordinary things through them. You do not make soft choices. You are willing to try daring new ideas. You don’t mind going against the flow, standing alone for truth.

You embrace ideas that the world may reject, but ones that God has promised to reward. If this is true, you are already well on your way to victory.

Most people are impressed by others who accomplish great things but never put in the extra effort to make it

happen in their own lives. It is only the extraordinary folks who press past the initial hurdles and reach the finish line in triumph. This is a choice each of us has to make, not the result of circumstances dictated by chance. Anyone can make this choice! All who do will reap the benefits. It might take a little more effort for some of us, but by taking the right approach it can be just as rewarding and perhaps even more meaningful. We appreciate what we work for.

“ **GOD IS LOOKING FOR ORDINARY PEOPLE WHO ARE WILLING TO LET HIM DO EXTRAORDINARY THINGS THROUGH THEM.** ”

GO FOR THE GOLD

If you are seriously considering competing in the Bible Bee but have not quite made the final decision yet, let me encourage you to take it on. You can’t lose! As long as you are willing to set aside a few things

of lesser importance and give Bible memory a special focus for a few months, I say go for it and give it your best. First, read this little book to save yourself some time and learn from my mistakes. Then, gather more ideas and insights from others. Feel free to add, change, and revise what I have written to fit your specific needs. Finally, grab your Bible and begin memorizing. It will be an investment in eternity. Start making deposits today! You will never regret it.

This little book is by no means a comprehensive manual detailing every possible memorization technique and providing all the answers to every question you may have. But it *is* an account of what worked for me. I am simply sharing what I learned, with the hope that it will be of use to you in your journey to hide God's Word in your heart. My goal in writing this little book will be reached if more people come to appreciate the true value of God's Word and experience firsthand the life-changing power of knowing Christ on a deeper, richer, more intimate level.

INTRODUCTION

QUESTIONS TO "BEE" CONSIDERED

- Why am I reading this book?
- Can I memorize 1,500 verses in six months?
- What did I do today that will make a difference ten years from now? In eternity?
- Am I willing to be an ordinary person whom God can use to accomplish extraordinary things?

CHAPTER 1

WHY SHOULD
I MEMORIZE?

“A MONUMENTAL WASTE OF ENERGY?”

Why would anyone want to memorize? Why in the world would we spend hours of time and study just to be able to say some verses out of the Bible? There are always so many demands on our time! Isn't it good enough just to read the Bible?

I am convinced that unless we understand the true value of God's Word and how vital it is to memorize, meditate, and engraft it into our hearts and lives, we will easily get sidetracked and discouraged when difficulties arise and our initial excitement begins to fade. The entire rest of this book, and the entire Bible Bee for that matter, will be a waste of time unless we can establish a foundational reason for the *why* behind Bible memory.

\$100,000! REALLY?

As clearly as if it were yesterday, I remember the first time we ever heard about the Bible Bee. Mom and I were flipping through a Vision Forum catalog one evening and happened to notice an ad for a Bible