

Weekly Connector: Happy New Year

January 1, 2018

Hello Church!

On this first day of 2018, I thank God for your love to Sherry and me through your kindness and generosity demonstrated through your gifts, smiles, hugs, cards, and handshakes. We are so loved and I hope that you realize how much we love you, but more importantly - how deep and wide and long and high is the love the Lord has for you. You are truly the Beloved!

Happy New Year! As 2017 finds its place in the rear view mirror, we recognize that 2018 is ahead of us - filled with unknown opportunities, challenges, heartaches, and joyful celebrations. And, as we learned in yesterday's study of Nehemiah 8, in order that we be prepared for whatever lies ahead, we look to the Word of God so that each of us *"may be prepared for every good work!"* (2 Tim. 3:17)

Yesterday, I also offered you a challenge - one that I gave to my Northern Ugandan pastors and leaders in October: to memorize the words of Jesus captured in what we call "The Sermon on the Mount" found in the book of Matthew, chapters 5, 6, and 7. Some of you have already taken the challenge and have begun to memorize these very words of our King Jesus. However, I'm sure there are others of you that may be thinking, "This is another New Year's Resolution that won't last long. Why bother!?"

At the end of 2016, I made a commitment to the Lord (and to others) that I would be more diligent to memorize Scripture. Through the Lord's gracious response, I have been able to memorize more than I ever have before. These verses challenged me and prepared me for 2017. So, as we prepare for the coming year, I offer a few lessons I've learned that I hope will help.

Note: For those who like the digital-based helps, I have experienced great help from an application called "FighterVerse". Offered by "Desiring God", a ministry of John Piper, there is a cost of \$2.99 that is worth every single penny. I highly, highly recommend it. For those that prefer the manual method, I have developed a detailed plan for memorizing the Sermon on the Mount that is modeled on this application. I can make these available upon your request.

Now, the lessons:

- 1) Choose your translation once. Years ago, when I began memorizing more seriously, I chose the New International Version (1984). Once this was replaced with an update in 2011, I began some research and eventually chose the English Standard Version to memorize from. Remember, once you choose a version - stick with it!
- 2) Speak the verse(s). Many of us have songs that we memorized in our younger years. Part (or most) of our success to memorization of those songs comes from singing them. Like the rest of our muscles, when we use them repetitively, we develop a pattern that enables us to follow that pattern almost without thinking. I learned this in playing instruments and have found it to be true in memorizing Scripture. Speak the verse(s)!
- 3) Speak the Scripture reference at the beginning and at the end. This will help you remember where in Scripture the verse is located. As a sandwich has bread on the top and on the bottom, so the Scripture needs the reference at the beginning and the end!
- 4) Speak every word and don't short-cut the verse. It is often tempting to overlook or modify a seemingly inconsequential word. Don't give in to that temptation! The more you memorize the verse word-for-word, the more the Spirit will use your diligence to bring more out of the verse for "teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training"! (2 Tim. 3:16 NIV)
- 5) Review, review, review. Once you have a verse memorized, make sure you review it daily for 2 weeks, then weekly for 3 months, and finally once per month until it's so deeply entrenched, it comes to mind (and mouth) easily.
- 6) Review, review, review. Yes, it's that important!
- 7) Invite your family and friends to help. As you progress through these life-changing chapters, sometimes you will have many verses to review at once. Reading these verses as someone listens and corrects can help you improve more completely!

Please prayerfully consider this opportunity to join together and "hoard" God's Word in our hearts. I look forward to the changed lives that will come from these spiritual disciplines!

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God will stand forever! (Isaiah 40:8)

I love you, Church!

Pastor greg