

Back to the Altar

100 DAYS OF PRAYER

FOR THE GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION

May 16-22, 2025

The Unopened Gift That Transformed My Life

by Ramón Canals



Have you ever received a gift but forgotten to open it?

Over the years I have received many beautiful gifts

from my family and friends that I eagerly opened. However, one gift stands out above all the others: my first Bible. Although it was the best gift I have ever received, it was several years before I opened it. The dedication inside the cover of the Bible read, "So that you will never forget your friend or God." This copy of the Bible was given to me by a friend. Unfortunately, with time I had forgotten about my friend and, worse, the God depicted in its pages.

For many years that Bible remained out of view, hidden from the sight of all who lived in my house. This precious book gathered dust; it had no power in my life because it lay buried amid worthless objects. But a miracle occurred early one morning as I was driving back home from a dance hall in New York City. God spoke to me. I heard his voice three times. He told me, *Read the Bible. Read the Bible. Read the Bible.*

Read the Bible? I have never done that in my life, I thought. But that touch of the Almighty could not have come at a more appropriate time. I felt sad, tired, and miserable. I felt like escaping life, especially my youth. Past events made me reflect on the kind of life I was living. Two of my friends had died: one had jumped from the thirty-fifth floor of a building in New York City; the other was stabbed while negotiating a drug deal.

I had just left the dance hall at 4:00 in the morning. And the voice persisted, *Read the Bible. Read the Bible. Read the Bible.* It was not an audible voice, but the impression was so clear that I did not doubt that it was the voice of God.

After getting home, I began reading my Bible. At first, I did not understand it, but just reading it brought peace to my heart. Since the day I discovered the Bible, it has been a guiding light in my life.

Finding unhurried time to connect with God can be difficult in our fast-paced existence. We are often conditioned to be busy constantly. The pressures of modern life can consume every moment, leaving us with little time to cultivate our relationship with God. Finding unrushed time with God has always been my struggle (and I suspect I am not alone). There are times in my Christian experience that I spend hours in communion with God—basking in His presence and immersed in the Word and in prayer. But then I get so busy again that sometimes I scarcely have time to utter a prayer during the whole day.

I am unsatisfied with that type of spiritual life; you should be too. God's Word calls us to focus our eyes on Him always, even when we're busy. Though God inspires a personal and intimate relationship with us, we often respond with excuses: too busy, too tired, blah, blah, blah. But the Word of God reminds us gently to be still and know that He is God (Psalm 46:10), and to do that takes time.

Throughout the history of Christianity, humans have recognized the Bible's transforming power. The power is found, not in the book itself (for it is only ink and paper), but in its content: the living Word of the living God. Perhaps that's why the Lord Jesus said, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

The Bible has a transforming power that few recognize. My love for the Bible has been profound and deeply personal. When presented with a unique academic challenge during my university years—the memorization of 100 Bible verses—I relished the task.

This endeavor became a pilgrimage of sorts, with each verse carved into the corners of my mind like a sculptor etching intricate patterns onto stone. The journey was undeniably arduous at the onset. Yet as I braved the steep learning curve, it gradually became more manageable. This was the first step in my remarkable journey of Bible memorization. I began to etch entire psalms, key passages, and extensive sections of Scripture into my memory.

Despite my growing cache of memorized verses, I had never tried to commit an entire book of the Bible to memory. Perhaps this was because of a lack of ambition or determination. However, an unexpected hurdle transformed my approach to Scripture memorization.

In 2009 I underwent eye surgery to correct my nearsightedness. However, the surgery significantly impaired my ability to read for a time. A few months after my eye surgery, I was invited to spearhead a large-scale satellite evangelistic meeting. I wrestled with a predicament: how would I read my Bible or even the words on the screen during the meetings?

The idea ignited a passion within me. I made a commitment to memorize word-for-word each biblical verse that I planned to use every night. I prayed to God for help, and He kindly answered my prayers. Every night, as I encouraged the congregation to follow along with verses such as Romans 6:23, I recited the text from memory. Although many people thought I was reading the Bible directly, I had memorized the verses. After successfully reciting the Bible verses without making a single mistake for nine consecutive days, I realized the powerful impact of speaking God's Word from memory.

This experience taught me a valuable lesson. With God's help, anyone can memorize many sections of Scripture, perhaps even a whole book of the Bible, and be immensely blessed, just as I have been. This has become my goal. Just imagine the profound power of having the entire Bible committed to memory.

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God's Word in Our Heart

Welcome to another session of **Back to the Altar | 100 Days of Prayer!**

Let's do a quick review!

In the past several sessions we've learned the first three Back to the Altar principles. Do you remember what these first three principles are?

- **Principle #1** – Come to Jesus as You Are!
- **Principle #2** – Honor Jesus as Lord!
- **Principle #3** – Discover a Fresh Picture of Jesus in the Word and in Prayer.

Have you discovered Jesus in a new way in the Word this past week? If so, how did that discovery affect your walk with Jesus? *(Write down your answer or share your testimony with a friend.)*

Hiding God's Word in Our Heart - Introduction

As we prepare for this session, take a few moments and think about some of the most precious words that have ever been spoken to you. Chances are you remember exactly what was said, who said it, and where you were when these words were spoken. What are those words? Why do you remember them so well, and why were they so meaningful in your life when they were spoken? *(Write down or share your thoughts with a friend!)*

Some words are so precious that you can't ever forget them! However, God's Words are the most precious words ever spoken or written. Would you miss these words if you did not have access to a Bible? Now is the time to hide God's Word in your heart so it will always stay with you.

Supplemental Material to Take This Series Deeper

Videos & Handouts

1. Introduction to Memorizing the Word

<https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW7VID1>

2. Pastor Canals Sharing Scripture By Memory

<https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW7VID2>

3. The Key to Successful Scripture Memorization

<https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW7VID3>

Bonus Video: **A Deeper Look at Deuteronomy 6**

<https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW7VID4>

Bible Memorization Worksheet

<https://tinyurl.com/BibleMemorization>

Powerful Quotes on Memorizing Scripture

<https://tinyurl.com/EGW-SM>

In *Ministry of Healing* we are told, “Let them [the people of God] keep the treasure house of mind and heart filled with, ‘It is written.’ Hang in memory's hall the precious words of Christ. They are to be valued far above gold or silver” (p. 215).

In this session, we will learn how to master the art of hiding God's Word in our hearts. We will explore why Scripture memorization is vital, how to get started, and practical steps to make it a part of your daily life. By the end of this session, we pray that you will be equipped to start hiding God's Word in your heart.

Before we start our study, let's watch this short introductory video.

- **Play Video 1:** Introduction to Memorizing the Word - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW7VID1>

Now, you might ask yourself, “Why should we memorize Scripture?”

There are many reasons, but Psalm 119:11 gives us a very clear answer: “Your Word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.”

Memorizing Scripture isn't just about knowledge—it's about transformation. Memorizing the Word of God is about knowing God and deepening our relationship with Him and attuning our hearts with His.

Think you are too busy to memorize the Word? Consider Pastor Canals' testimony. He memorizes in both English and Spanish daily. Some books of the Bible he has already put to memory. Watch the following video where Pastor Canals recites two Scripture passages by memory. If he can do this, so can we!

- **Play Video 2:** Pastor Canals Sharing Scripture by Memory - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW7VID2>

Are you now really inspired to memorize the Word of God? We are!

Part 1: The Journey Begins

Here are three foundational steps to take as you begin your Scripture memorization journey:

1. **Ask God for a Burning Desire:** Ask God to give you a longing to internalize His Word. Even if the desire feels small, pray for it to grow.
2. **Pray for the Holy Spirit's Help:** Memorizing Scripture is not just a mental exercise; it's a spiritual practice. Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you and strengthen your memory.
3. **Act in Faith:** Select a Bible version you love, choose a verse, book, or chapter, and take the first step. Trust that God will help you.

Part 2: Simple Memorization Steps

The following are simple and effective steps to memorizing Scripture. We will give examples how to apply these steps, and then we will take time to practice memorizing a verse.

1. **Choose a Verse or Passage:** Start with a single verse. For example, let's use Philippians 4:13 which says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."
2. **Pray:** After you choose your verse, pray for the Holy Spirit to help you memorize. Pray that the verse you've chosen will become a living and active part of your daily life.
3. **Read:** Read the verse out loud several times, including the reference at the beginning and at the end of the verse. This is not about becoming like a parrot that simply repeats something it has heard, but learning the verse word perfect with the reference included is significant.
4. **Break It Down:** Divide the verse into smaller, logical phrases or sections.
 "I can do all things"
 "through Christ"
 "who strengthens me."
5. **Recite Out Loud:** Recite each phrase seven times by memory, then connect the sections together. Repeat the entire verse 21 times by memory, along with the reference. These 21 total repetitions help move the verse from short-term to long-term memory.
6. **Record and Listen:** Record a voice memo of yourself reciting the verse and listen to it throughout your day as many times as possible.
7. **Use Your Imagination:** As you recite the verse, visualize the meaning of the verse. Picture yourself drawing strength from Christ as you face challenges.
8. **Write and Pray:** Write the verse down from memory. Handwriting is best, and writing helps reinforce memory. Then turn the verse into a prayer. For example: "Lord, I believe that I can do all things through You, for You are my strength."

Now, using the worksheet found at this link (<https://tinyurl.com/BibleMemorization>) take about 15-20 minutes to practice the above steps with a single verse. Choose one of the following verses to memorize: Joshua 1:8, Colossians 3:16, Hebrews 4:12, Isaiah 26:3, or Psalm 16:8. Be sure to pick a verse that you have not already memorized!

Part 3: Forming a Life-Long Habit

To master Scripture memorization, consistency is key. Seek to integrate Scripture memorization into your daily routine.

Here's some suggestions:

- **Morning Devotions:** Start your day by reciting a verse during your prayer time.
- **Commuting:** Listen to recorded verses while driving or taking public transport.
- **Walking/Waiting/Witnessing:** Use moments of walking or waiting—like in a line or on hold—or when you are with others as opportunities to recite Scripture. When we share a passage that we've learned with someone, it becomes even more meaningful.
- **Evening Reflection:** Reflect on the verses you've learned as you wind down at night. Recite it in your mind as you go to sleep. You will likely wake up with it on your mind the next morning.

Again, repetition is the secret code of memorization. Just as habits form through repeated actions, memorizing Scripture happens when we engage with it daily.

Part 4: Meditation - The Key to Scripture Memorization

Read/Reflect on the following passages: Psalm 1:2, Psalm 77:11-12, Psalm 119:11. What do these passages tell you about the importance of meditation?

Read/Reflect on Psalm 119:87-99: What does this passage teach us about the beauty of Biblical meditation? Which part of this passage speaks the most to the hunger of your heart today?

Memorization is just the beginning—meditation brings the Word to life. As Ellen White once stated, “The Bible was given for practical purposes.” As you memorize, take time to reflect on the meaning of the verses and the practical application. Ask yourself questions like:

- What is God saying to me through this passage?
- How does this apply to my life today?
- Then pray over the text and let it shape your thoughts and actions.

Let's take a few moments to watch this additional inspiring video with Pastor Canals.

- **Play Video 3** – The Key to Successful Scripture Memorization - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW7VID3>

Start today. Choose one verse, commit it to memory, and let it change your life. Remember, the Word of God isn't just meant to be read—it's meant to be lived.

Part 5: Personal Practical Application

- **1st Challenge:** Pray for God to give you a desire to memorize the Word of God. Pray for the Holy Spirit to help you.
- **2nd Challenge:** Choose two to four verses to memorize this next week. Pick verses that have spoken to your heart from your own unrushed devotional time in the Word. Follow the steps outlined in this lesson to help you memorize them.
- **3rd Challenge:** Take practical active steps to incorporate Scripture memory into your daily habits! Be prepared to share next session the steps you've taken!

Remember, you are invited to join the General Conference's weekly Back to the Altar revival on Zoom, which takes place every Sunday at 6 A.M. Eastern Standard Time. All are welcome!

Zoom Link - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTA100> Password: 18442025

Also, join believers around the world in prayer focusing on these Back to the Altar themes every day of the week at: www.247unitedprayer.org.

Time to pray!

Additional Bonus Material

To help your memorization of the Word have an even more powerful effect in your daily life, consider doing your a deeper study on Deuteronomy 6. God's instructions to Moses in Deuteronomy 6 weren't just for ancient Israel—they're a guide for us today. They reveal how to internalize His Word in a way that shapes our thoughts, actions, and character. The principles found in Deuteronomy 6 combined with the steps above work together to create an environment of Scripture immersion that will forever change your life.

- **Play Video 4 - A Deeper Look at Deuteronomy Chapter 6 -** <https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW7VID4>
- **Supplemental Handout on Deuteronomy 6 -** <https://tinyurl.com/Deut-6-Study>
- **Scripture Memory Bookmark to print -** <https://tinyurl.com/SM-Bookmark>
- **Quotes on Scripture Memory -** <https://tinyurl.com/EGW-SM>
- **Fast Scripture Memory Course -** www.fastmissions.com

Pastor Canals has written a book titled *Back to the Bible: A Call to Refocus Our Minds on the Word of God*. In this book, he shares many practical tips on Scripture memorization. The book is available on Amazon and in Adventist Book Centers. There will also be free copies in the prayer room at GC session.

An excellent resource to help with Scripture memorization is www.fastmissions.com. Members of the Back to the Altar leadership team highly recommend this course.

Prayer Focus

For May 16-22, 2025



Promises to Claim as You Pray

"Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven." Psalm 119:89

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you." John 15:7

"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him." 1 John 5:14-15

Prayer Focus for Week 7

1. **PREPARE:** Dear Heavenly Father, as we start this new week focusing on turning our hearts back to the Bible, prepare our mind to be stretched. Make us willing to move outside our comfort zone of the normal life routine as we allow You to prepare and grow our character for Your soon coming. (Claim Rev. 22:7)
2. **REST:** Dear Father God, as we enter Your sacred Sabbath rest, help us to rest in You. Help us to rest our sins at Your feet, to rest our worries on Your shoulders, to rest our future in Your hands, and to rest our identity in the fact that You love us, and we are Your children. (Claim Romans 8:15)
3. **PRAY:** Dear Jesus, as our church leaders from around the world prepare for General Conference session, we ask that You prepare their hearts for the decisions they will make, for the new leadership roles they will take, and for the mission You are calling them to embrace. Helps us to encourage the leaders appointed by God and lift up their arms in prayer, just like Aaron and Hur lifted up the arms of Moses. (Claim John 15:7)
4. **DESIRE:** Dear Heavenly Father, please give us a hunger and burning desire to lay up Your words in our heart. Send Holy Spirit power that we will remember what we've memorized and know how to apply it practically in everyday life. (Claim Col. 3:16)
5. **GROW:** Dear Jesus, grow us as individuals, families, and churches. Refine our characters and purge away the chaff of sin and spiritual compromise from our hearts. Teach us how to build strong our altars of worship. (Claim John 4:24)
6. **EMBRACE:** Dear Heavenly Father, help us to embrace the call, I WILL GO. Give us courage to share with all we meet the Hope found in Your Word. (Claim John 17:3)
7. **DARE:** Dear Jesus, we ask for big things at the upcoming General Conference session. We are asking for an outpouring of Your Holy Spirit. We will not let go. We dare to ask for more. (Claim Jer. 33:3)