

100 BIBLE VERSES

*everyone should
know by heart*

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MORGAN



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To
Ava Grace

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PREFACE

100 WAYS TO CHANGE YOUR LIFE

This book is about the archaic custom of memorizing Scripture, why we must revive it, and how you can begin a lifelong habit of learning Bible verses by heart. Think of it as a shopping spree for the mind, a chance to collect and store up treasures you'll enjoy for years.

Restoring the art of Scripture memory is crucial for us, our churches, and children. It's vital for mental and emotional health and for spiritual well-being. Though it's as easy as repeating words aloud, it's as powerful as acorns dropping into furrows in the forest. It makes the Bible portable; you can take it with you everywhere without packing it in purse or briefcase. It makes Scripture accessible day and night. It allows God's Word to sink into your brain and permeate your subconscious and even your unconscious thoughts. It gives you a word to say to anyone, in season and out of season. It fills your heart and home with the best thoughts ever recorded. It saturates the personality, satiates the soul, and stockpiles the mind. It changes the atmosphere of every family and alters the weather forecast of every day.

It takes one minute a day, or five or ten—whatever you can devote to it. It can be done in your bath, your bed, at your desk, or in an airplane (you can't say all that about too many things). It can be done on the go, in traffic jams, while shaving, at sunup, or before bedtime. It can be

done alone, with another person, or in groups. It's an amazingly versatile habit but also a vital one, profitable whether we're in the nursery or in the nursing home.

Here, then, are 100 ways to change your life—100 Bible verses everyone on earth should know by heart. Please don't complain if your favorite verse isn't among them. I kept changing my list even up to publication date; but I've left a blank page in the back so you can add your own verses and keep the habit going.

I'm deeply grateful to my literary partners: Thomas Walters, my editor; Chris Ferebee, my agent; Sherry Anderson and Emily Youree, my assistants; my Web expert and advisor, Joshua Rowe; and my dear wife, Katrina, who read every word with a keen eye. Undying thanks also goes to the church I've had the joy of pastoring for thirty years—The Donelson Fellowship of Nashville—who participated in a yearlong sermon series on which this book is based.

If you'd like to contact me, please visit my Web site at www.robertjmorgan.com, where you'll also find free supplemental resources, including a study guide, publicity tools, and downloadable materials for churches and small groups wanting to learn these 100 verses together.

PART ONE

THE POWER
OF SCRIPTURE MEMORY



For as he thinks within himself, so he is.

(Proverbs 23:7 NASB)

ONE

AS WE THINK

James Allen has been called a literary man of mystery. Little is known about him, and his writing career was as fleeting as an arrow through the sky. He never achieved fame or fortune, and he died at forty-eight. He wrote nineteen or twenty books without saying much about himself in any of them; and none of them sold particularly well in his lifetime. Yet one tiny volume—his second book and one with which he himself was unhappy—has since sold millions of copies and influenced countless lives.

James was born in 1864, in an idyllic part of central England; but his childhood wasn't so idyllic. His father, grappling with a failing business and near bankruptcy, traveled to America, searching for a new job. Instead, he was waylaid, robbed, and murdered. Back in England, the family's ensuing financial crisis forced young James to drop out of school at age fifteen and get a job. He became a personal assistant in the world of British manufacturers, and he worked at that profession until 1902, when, at age thirty-eight, he just quit and walked away.

James and his wife moved to the little coastal town of Ilfracombe, one of the loveliest spots in all England, and he lived there for about ten years before his early death. He kept a strict routine. Each morning he'd get up before dawn and hike to the top of the nearby hillside and spend an hour in meditation. Then he would return to his house and devote the morning to writing. The afternoons he allocated to his gardens and hobbies.

To the best of my knowledge, he was not a Christian, but one little book was based on a Bible verse from the book of Proverbs, and that small volume has cast a long shadow. It almost single-handedly gave rise to the self-improvement and positive thinking movement of the past 100 years.

It's entitled *As a Man Thinketh*, based on Proverbs 23:7: "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he" (NKJV). The point of *As a Man Thinketh* is simple: Our thoughts are the most important thing about us. All that we achieve or fail to achieve is the direct result of our thinking. Our thoughts are like seeds that produce crops.

Allen wrote: "Good thoughts and actions can never produce bad results; bad thoughts and actions can never produce good results. This is but saying that nothing can come from corn but corn, nothing from nettles but nettles. Men understand this law in the natural world, and work with it; but few understand it in the mental and moral world (though its operation there is just as simple and undeviating)."¹

His point is that we *are* what we *think*, and our lives run in the direction of our thoughts. If we think angry thoughts, we'll be angry; if we think positive thoughts, we'll be positive; if we think negative thoughts, we'll be negative. The mind is a garden, and we have to cultivate it, and we are responsible for the kind of seed we sow into the furrows of our mind.

To quote Allen again: "A [person's] mind may be likened to a garden, which may be intelligently cultivated or allowed to run wild; but whether cultivated or neglected, it must, and will, bring forth. If no useful seeds are put into it, then an abundance of useless seeds will fall therein, and will continue to produce their kind."²

I love Allen's little book, and I believe in positive thinking, optimism, and a can-do spirit. But I'm not a fan of most of the positive-thinking literature so popular in the self-help sections of our bookstores. I want *Truth* behind my optimism—solid Scripture, well interpreted. I don't want a mind filled with mottoes and mantras but with memory verses from the infallible Word of God.

I believe the Bible is the inspired and unfailing message from a God who is both intimate and infinite, and who is omniscient and omnipotent. It verbalizes His revealed intelligence about how we should think, feel, act, and speak. Its theology is therapeutic, and its advice is sensible. Every verse in the Bible is priceless, for all Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and we're to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (2 Tim. 3:16; Matt. 4:4).

As a parent and a pastor, I've tried for decades to drop the seeds of specific Scriptures into the furrows of my thoughts—and into the minds of others. Scripture memory is a way of digging into the soul and planting the truth a little deeper in order to achieve a richer harvest. Yes, it's a lost habit among most people; but losing it is like an explorer losing his map or a nation losing her constitution.

In the following pages let me show you what Scripture memory can do for you and how you can develop this enriching routine. A verse learned goes into our memories and from there into our conscious and subconscious minds. From there it appears in the room of imagination, from whence it shows up in the way we live, think, feel, talk, act, and achieve. The principle of Proverbs 23:7 is true 24-7. It is an inviolable law of life that cannot be altered and will be true as long as human nature endures: For as we think in our hearts so are we.