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by d. mason rutledge



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## INTRODUCTION

Life is a journey. It is full of excitement, adventure, and fun.

The most significant event in this journey happened when you met Christ and made Him your Savior. That event may have felt like the end of your journey, and in a sense it was, but it was also the beginning. Your old journey ended and a new journey began (see 2 Corinthians 5:17).

When you committed your life to Christ, you were most likely promised a new life of excitement, adventure, and fun. And certainly that's what the Christian life can be. There is nothing that compares to walking through life with Jesus. In fact, He came to give you life to the full (see John 10:10).

What you may not have realized at the time, though, is that this new life with Christ would also have its challenges, struggles, and difficulties. Have you discovered that yet?

*Memorize This* is designed to assist you in each stage of this new journey. It will help you celebrate the excitement, adventure, and fun, as well as carry you through the challenges, struggles, and difficulties of life.

But *Memorize This* is only an aid. It will introduce you to another book, the Bible, in which you can find divine wisdom for living. Think of God's Word as a map for your life journey.

## MAP FOR THE JOURNEY

My children have a map they enjoy looking at called *The Big, Big, Big World Atlas*. Its two-by-three-foot cardboard pages have large, colorful maps of the world's continents. The maps not only include titles and borders but also contain descriptive pictures. For example, there are pictures of the Space Needle in Seattle, mountains in Colorado, and wooden shoes in Holland. While these maps are colorful and somewhat informative, they are not maps we use to navigate our family trips.

When we want to get somewhere, there is another map we use, which we keep in the car. This compact, folded map is not so colorful, but it is very informative. When we are unsure of the route to a place, it helps us find the way. If we make a wrong turn, it redirects us. During the course of our trip, it confirms that we are going in the right direction.

In the same way, the Bible serves as a map for our journey through life with Christ. It is one of the key tools God has given us.

Many people want to receive directions like those given by *The Big, Big, Big World Atlas*. They might say, "Give me the big, colorful pictures and a general sense of my place in the world, but don't get specific with the direction of my life."

The Psalms, however, say that God's Word is a light unto our path (see Psalm 119:105). We are to use a map that will give us details. Unlike *The Big, Big, Big World Atlas*, the Bible gives specific direction. It may not be as colorful, but it is packed with information that will help you get where you are going. As you become more familiar with the information in the Bible, the person it speaks of—Jesus Christ—will become more real in your life.

## THE JOURNEY IN STAGES

Just as a journey changes as you move forward, so does your walk with Christ. One of the greatest challenges for you as a follower of Christ is to overcome the belief that you have finally arrived. There is no “arriving” until the “eternal arrival.”

Nevertheless, it is common for followers of Christ to plateau. They attain a certain level of knowledge where they feel comfortable and then do not pursue further growth. This is dangerous in any endeavor. For example, in learning to snowboard, you don't stay on the green runs (beginner level) forever. Having attained competency in green runs, you move forward to the blue runs (intermediate level). To stay on the green runs would be boring. It wouldn't be all that snowboarding can be.

*Leaders who plateau early reveal a common pattern. They learn new skills until they can operate comfortably within them, but then fail to seek new skills deliberately and habitually. They coast on prior experience.<sup>1</sup>*

—J. ROBERT CLINTON

This is something to be careful of in your journey with Christ as well. The Bible says that as we mature in our faith, we should be like people who grow up from babyhood and progress from drinking milk to eating meat (see Hebrews 5:12-14). Spiritually speaking, some are not ready for meat and must continue with milk because they are immature. This is not healthy. Your walk with Christ must move forward for you to experience all that Christ has planned for your life.

*Memorize This* is a tool primarily for high school and first- and second-year college students. It is a progressive building tool in four

stages. Each stage is designed to encourage your growth in Christ. Don't rush it. In fact, I recommend that you take a year for each stage, perhaps even two years for the second and third stages. Use each stage as you are ready for it in your life journey.

When you complete a stage of this journey, make sure you celebrate. (You may even want to celebrate after each individual topic.) To complete a stage is a great accomplishment, and you deserve dinner out — super-sized.

Now let's look more closely at the four stages around which *Memorize This* is organized:

*Stage One: New Believer.* The first phase is intended for those who have just met Christ or for those who are beginning their own faith journey. For example, it would be perfect for someone who has recently completed confirmation. The focus is on assurance — assurance of God's love, of who Jesus is, of your salvation, and so on.

*Stage Two: Growing Disciple.* The second phase is meant for those who are in a discipling relationship. Each phase is best completed (whether individually or as part of a group) under the direction of a mature believer, but this is especially true with the second phase. Do yourself a favor and complete this phase under the direction of a mature Christian who will make himself or herself available for discussion on the topics.

*Stage Three: Life Issues.* This phase is designed for high school seniors or college freshmen. It examines the challenges of an adult journey with Christ, including humility, purity, prayer, and so forth.

*Stage Four: Leadership.* This final stage builds upon the three previous stages and provides verses for young people in Christian leadership. These verses primarily focus on how we can show our faith.

## USING THIS TOOL

As a progressive guide to your life journey with Christ, *Memorize This* serves several purposes. Use it as a discipleship tool, a Bible study, and a Scripture memory system.

*Discipleship.* As I have already said, I recommend that you work on *Memorize This* with another person or group. It can be a friend or small group of friends with whom you commit to working on the verses and studies. It can also be a mentor, an older, more experienced follower of Christ who will walk with you through the stages.

Your *Memorize This* partner needs to be committed to you, to the Bible, and to the process. This is important. Your partner must be willing to meet with you and quiz you on the verses. He or she must be willing to study the Bible with you. Finally, this partner must be committed to the details and to the excellence that successful completion of this program requires.

*Bible study.* As you work through *Memorize This*, you will dig into many key portions of God's Word. So as you're memorizing verses, you'll also be learning more of the meaning of the special book God has given us for our good.

To maximize the Bible study function of the program, focus on more than just the memory verses. Open your Bible and read the chapter in which the verse is located as well as the chapters before and after. Do not allow these verses to live in isolation. Draw them from the context of the narrative. You'll learn so much more that way.

*Scripture memory.* Of course, the primary use of *Memorize This* is as a tool to help you memorize passages of the Bible. The Bible says that if we focus on the Word of God, we will not sin against God (see

Psalm 119:11). Memorization helps us focus on Scripture like nothing else.

One tool for memorizing Scripture that has proved successful for decades is the *Topical Memory System (TMS)* developed by The Navigators. *Memorize This* is an updated version of the *Topical Memory System*; that's why it is subtitled *TMS 3.0*. It has been carefully adapted for today's teenage and college-age followers of Christ. It works.

Have you ever focused your energy on accomplishing a task? Maybe it was to play a varsity sport. Maybe it was to get Mario through the castle. Maybe it was to get a good grade in a class. Whatever the task, your effort paid off.

Bible verse memorization will pay off big-time for you. It will change your personal relationships, improve your walk with Jesus, and give you a new outlook on life.

It is critical, therefore, that you are disciplined in this effort. To reap the long-term benefits of verse memorization, you must be consistent and well organized in this work.

Yet if you do fall behind, don't give up. Pick up where you left off and go for it! There will be periods when you are simply too busy to invest as much time as you would like to; that's natural. So be disciplined, but give yourself grace. Just never quit.

*If you slip and stumble and forget God for an hour, and assert your old proud self, and rely upon your own clever wisdom, don't spend too much time in anguished regrets and self-accusations but begin again, just where you are.<sup>2</sup>*

—THOMAS KELLY

At the same time, it is important to be exact. Be word-perfect. If you miss a word or say a wrong word in repeating a verse, go back and start

over immediately. Make sure that whoever is checking verses for you knows that the standard is perfection.

Memorize not only the verse itself but also the topic title and verse reference. To have a number of unorganized verses floating in our minds is not as helpful as having the structure provided by this program.

When memorizing a verse, start with the topic—for example, “Assurance of Eternal Life.” Then say the reference, such as “John 3:16.” Follow that by an exact reciting of the verse. End by repeating the reference: “John 3:16.” It is important that you carefully follow this pattern to memorize your verses because it has been proven to work best.

In summary, *Memorize This* is three tools in one: a discipleship tool, a Bible study, and a Scripture memory system. Use it for all its worth.

## **YOU CAN MAKE THE JOURNEY**

You have so much work to do. Your time is divided among school, work, friends, sports, church, homework, and on, and on. It’s difficult to commit to a new program, especially something that involves memorization. You already have to memorize a lot for school.

Yet *Memorize This* is one effort that will impact every part of your life. It will be difficult at first, but as you continue, you will see changes in your attitude, your relationships, and your journey with Christ. These changes will encourage you all the more.

You can do it! God will be with you in this effort. In addition, your mentor, partner, or group will motivate you to keep going.

Carry your verses with you, and when you have downtime, go through them. Waiting at stoplights, go through your verses. Standing in line for your grande white chocolate mocha, go through your verses. Riding the bus to the away game, go through your verses. Work on your verses all the time.

Each verse is included in four Bible versions on cards in the back of this book. Choose the translation of each verse that you like best and memorize that one. Organize or re-create the verses in a manner that works best for you. You may want to have them laminated on sheets. You may want to burn them as an audio file on CD and listen to them. You may want to put them on a handheld device. Do what you need to do.

Also, find the best time and place for you to do your memorization work. Some find it best to review the verses first thing in the morning or before they go to sleep at night. Others do it during lunch or at a coffee shop. And still others work on them during a walk around the neighborhood or on a hike. Whenever and wherever you do it, make sure you have a consistent schedule to work on your verses. Your small group or mentor can help you with this system.

You are starting on a magnificent journey. At times it will be difficult. This will be true especially in the beginning as your mind and soul are stretched in a new direction. Realize that you are training for a marathon, not a sprint.

There will also be amazing times as you memorize these verses and work through the study. You will sense God bringing verses to your mind to bless you and others. You will see that the benefits are completely worth the effort.

Have a great time and enjoy the journey! Now memorize this . . .


## NEW BELIEVER

We begin the *Memorize This* endeavor by breaking down the eight core components of assurance that every follower of Christ ought to have. They include:

- Assurance of God's love for you and the world
- Assurance of who Jesus is
- Assurance of your own forgiveness
- Assurance of strength for this journey
- Assurance of an answer to prayer
- Assurance of your salvation
- Assurance of guidance during the journey

Your faith journey with Jesus is something you need to be sure of. You need to know that God loves you. You need to understand that Jesus actually walked this earth. You need to believe that you are forgiven.

Your faith journey certainly didn't start with assurances. It most likely started with a number of questions—questions that probably still bounce around in your head like lotto balls trying to come up with the winning combination. But there's no reason why you can't proceed with assurance. And that means having faith.



*Faith is not intelligent understanding, faith is deliberate commitment to a Person where I see no way.<sup>1</sup>*


—OSWALD CHAMBERS

You will rarely have enough assurance of God's love, your own forgiveness, or any of the other topics listed earlier. Your journey with Jesus is going to depend a great deal on your faith in Him and what He has done. This is the ground you want to build upon.

Jesus once told the story of two house builders. (You've probably heard the story and sung the song. Do you remember?) One built his house on sand and the other built his house on a rock. When the storm came, the house built on the rock remained standing and provided its owner with shelter, but the man who built his house upon the sand lost everything (see Matthew 7:24-27).

Now that your journey has begun, it's time to grow in your assurance. The answers may never be 100 percent, but you can grow in your assurance of the answers.

Memorize this and grow not only in your assurance but also in your faith.



## ASSURANCE OF GOD'S LOVE

God absolutely loves you. Do you know that? It's hard to get our mind around, but it is true. He loves you.

*Becoming the Beloved means letting the truth of our Belovedness become enfleshed in everything we think, say and do.<sup>1</sup>*

—HENRI J. M. NOUWEN

This is where the faith journey starts: understanding that God loves you. If you do not have an assurance of God's love, your faith journey will not last long.

Memorize this and you will grow in your assurance of God's love:

- Psalm 86:5
- Zephaniah 3:17
- Romans 5:5
- 1 Kings 8:23

### THE GOOD GOD

You are forgiving and good, O Lord,  
abounding in love to all who call to you. (Psalm 86:5)

It is not advisable to experience the verses in *Memorize This* in isolation. That can be a dangerous practice. Each verse shared is part of a larger book and the total of God's love letter to us—the Bible.

In that light, read all of Psalm 86. Then jot down things that stand out to you in the psalm.

Psalms is unlike most other books in the Bible. It could be called a songbook or book of poetry because the psalms were used by believers to worship the Lord.

Did you notice how small capital letters were used in several places to refer to God in the psalm? When you see “LORD” in the Bible, that reads *YHWH* in the original Hebrew text. You may have heard it pronounced *Yahweh*. It is the most reverent and holy name used for God in the Bible.

*Yahweh* was considered to be a mysterious God. The Israelites respected and even feared Him. After all, this was the God who destroyed whole cities. His followers approached Him with caution.

David, the writer of Psalm 86, was king of Israel and one of the most incredible individuals of history. God said David was a man after God’s own heart. But David was also a man who had some struggles along his life journey. He had an affair and was a murderer. He was a sinner just like you and me.

Read Psalm 86 again. How does your new insight into God and the

author of this psalm change your perspective on it? Jot down some thoughts.

God is still mysterious. We don't know why certain things happen in our lives. And we are still sinners. We do things that we know God would rather we not do.

With this in mind, write your own personal paraphrase of Psalm 86:5.

### **THE GOD WHO IS WITH US**

“The LORD your God is with you,  
he is mighty to save.  
He will take great delight in you,  
he will quiet you with his love,  
he will rejoice over you with singing.”  
(Zephaniah 3:17)

For context, read Zephaniah 3. Zephaniah was a prophet. A prophet is one who speaks the words of God. Let's break this verse down.

“The LORD your God is with you.” What does this mean? When have you experienced God with you?

“He is mighty to save.” This is a powerful, life-changing line. Our God is not a wimp. He is able and ready to save us from anything. He is in charge.

Sometimes it is hard to see how God has saved us. He may be saving us all the time and we don’t see it.

The movie *Signs* gives us a great picture of how God saves us. In the movie, the world is under attack by space aliens who come to the home of Graham, a former Episcopal priest, played by Mel Gibson. Graham’s son has asthma, and during the attack, the son nears death because of his condition. Graham hates God because God has given his son this condition, and his son is unable to breathe. But when an alien tries to kill Graham’s son with poison, the poison does not enter his body because the asthma has closed his lungs. Graham realizes that the asthma has actually saved his son’s life. Earlier in the story, the last words of Graham’s dying wife to her husband were “Graham . . . see!”

Do you “see”? God is saving you all the time. How can you enhance your ability to see God working in your life? It begins by asking, “God, help me to see.” It continues by looking for His action in your life. It concludes by writing it down.

God will move in your life this week. Jot a few lines about the experience. See!

*It seems every day ends with a miracle here. And whatever God may be, I thank God for this day.*

“He will take great delight in you.” God not only loves you; He likes you. Sometimes love can feel like a requirement: *I have to love my sister, because we’re in the same family.* It’s way more than this for God. He really likes to hang out with you, like a best friend.

“He will quiet you with his love.” Often we are quieted with a shout — *Hey, shut up!* Zephaniah said that God will quiet us with His love. Have you ever been quieted by love? It’s like melting.

Finally, “He will rejoice over you with singing.” You make God sing!

Draw a picture of this verse. It doesn’t have to be a great painting, just a simple picture of what it means for you to experience God as expressed by Zephaniah in the verse.

## **GOD OF LOVE**

Hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. (Romans 5:5)

Read Romans 5. The book of Romans is in the New Testament. We experience God at a new level in the New Testament, as compared to the Old Testament.

How can you see this new relationship with God expressed in this verse?

Many Bible versions title sections within the chapter. What title does your Bible version give for this section?

This verse talks about three feelings: hope, disappointment, and love. How have you experienced these three?

- Hope:
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Disappointment:
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Love:

Write about a personal relationship that has included all three.

How is your relationship with God similar to this relationship?

God has called you into a special love relationship, one based on hope. These assurances are building on that hope. But there will be disappointments. There will be times when you disappoint God and times when you are disappointed by Him. It is for those times that He has provided the Holy Spirit to pour love into your being.

The deepest of relationships experience times of hope, disappointment, and love. These times deepen our love even more.

### **THE GOD OVER ALL**

O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below — you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way. (1 Kings 8:23)

This passage does not live in isolation; it is part of a larger story. It's a long chapter, but read all of 1 Kings 8 for context. What is the larger story in this passage?

Prayer is an important part of our relationship with God. It is one of the primary ways we communicate with Him. This prayer demonstrates that.

Verse 23 talks about gods in heaven and on the earth. At the time it was written, many people worshiped idols. For the most part, we do not have statue idols today, though we may still have things in our lives that we treat like idols.

God in heaven we can understand, but what are gods on earth? What idols do people worship here on earth?

A covenant is a contract. We have a contract of love with God if we wholeheartedly pursue Him. What does it mean for you to wholeheartedly pursue God?

Write a covenant of love with God, and include the aspects found in this prayer. Name the “earthly gods” in your life, express how you will continue to wholeheartedly follow the one true God, and so on.





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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## POP QUIZ

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- b) [www.thinkbooks.com](http://www.thinkbooks.com) was already taken
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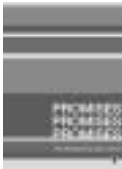
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