

## Chapter 11 - Weaving a Web

My mother is a retired librarian. She and my dad worked on their master's degrees every summer while I was in grade school.

I remember spending several evenings reading books from the university's "kiddie lit" section while my parents worked on research papers or made photocopies.

Mom always knew the best children's books. When she went to library conferences, she stood in line to have noted children's authors autograph their books for me. I now have a tidy collection of signed, first edition books that I consider to be family heirlooms.

Some of those same books were read to me in school. My third grade teacher, Mrs. Flanders, would read a book to us for about 30 minutes after lunch every day.

She would draw the blinds, close the door, and sit in a chair so that she was at eye level with her eight-year-old students. The mood she set always gave me a cozy feeling.

One of the first books I remember from those days is "Charlotte's Web." Long before the World Wide Web gave us social media platforms (filled with misspelled words and grammatical errors), a tiny spider demonstrated friendship and the importance of words to a little pig named Wilbur.

If you've never read "Charlotte's Web," grab an eight-year-old and read it out loud at your earliest opportunity!

Charlotte the spider does what we hope we can do for our own loved ones. She makes her friend, Wilbur the pig, feel special. In fact, she uses her talents to save his life by weaving words into her intricately designed webs, describing the wonderful characteristics of this little pig.

The books from my childhood have created their own kind of webs in my life, memory webs. I can remember when Mrs. Flanders read "Charlotte's Web" to me and my classmates, and I can remember

enjoying the book with my children. In the future, I hope to share “Charlotte’s Web” with my grandchildren.

Each time I’ve read this book, or had it read to me, I’ve attached memories to the words written in it. I can still recall explaining the meaning of “radiant” to my five-year-old and listening to my children discuss the behavior of Templeton the rat.

Spoiler alert: Charlotte dies. My kids were not happy about that.

### **Making Memory Webs**

As I recite my memory verses, God creates new memory webs for me, connecting a verse I memorized two years ago to a verse I memorized last week. I also create my own memory webs by varying the method of my recitation and by re-organizing my verses, as I explained in the previous chapter.

In this chapter, I’m going to share some of the other kinds of memory webs I create to help my verses stick and stay stuck in my brain. I’ve mentioned some of these ideas before, but now it’s time to put them all together.

### **Use Bible Study Methods**

- Use Bible study techniques to understand what the verse really means.
- Incorporate the verse into your quiet time at least five times during the week you are trying to memorize it.
- Use a journal to write down your thoughts about the verse throughout the week.
- Read the verse all week in context. You’ll be surprised how much more you glean from the verse each time you read it.
- Make sure you understand the cultural references that are made in the chapter where the verse is found. You may have to add to your library or do a little online research to find out more about the Jewish culture, but keep in mind all web sites are not equal. Make sure you use online sources from a group or person with valid credentials.

- Use a parallel Bible, or go to a parallel online Bible, to see how the translation of your verse varies from one version to another. Sometimes, a word or phrase from another translation will give you more insight into your verse. If they make an impact, those words from other translations will stay with you. For example, when I memorized Ephesians 2:10, “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do,” I found that the International Standard Version (ISV) calls us “God’s masterpiece.” The thought that I am God’s masterpiece makes me want to live up to the purpose for which He made me. Also, reading different translations may help you find your memory hook.
- Use a study Bible to gain more depth from the content, particularly to help you understand difficult passages or unusual words.
- Look up cross-references. There have been so many times that, in looking up a cross-reference, I’ve found a storehouse of other verses to add to my Scripture memory list.

### **Focus on the Content of Each Verse**

- When you recite the verse, state the reference before and after the passage.
- Say the verse out loud. Doing this reinforces your tactile and auditory learning of the verse.
- When you recite the verse, use various inflections, stressing different words. Don’t let your words become monotone. As you change the inflection, you may notice a richer meaning to words you had not paid much attention to before.
- When you review your verses, pray them back to God, stopping, when led, to pray about how a particular phrase is speaking to you or how it applies to your current situation or the need of others you are praying for.
- Memorize one verse from each chapter in a book to get an overview of the entire book.
- Memorize Old Testament and New Testament cross-references to better understand your verse.

### **Recite, Recite, Recite**

- Recite all the verses you have memorized for the current year **every day** as part of your quiet time. Mix in verses you have memorized in previous years at least every other day.

- I explained in the previous chapter how you can categorize older verses so that you can recite smaller groupings, but it's also important to take the time to occasionally recite all the verses you've memorized since you began this method. It really doesn't take that long. When you pause long enough to recite all your verses, you'll be encouraged by what you've accomplished.

### **Create a Personal Devotional**

God will reveal more and more truths to you as you recite a verse over a period of time. The circumstances that color your life will give you a new perspective on the verses you memorize so that the meaning of each verse will become more faceted.

As God gives you a fresh perspective or deeper meaning for one of your verses, keep a journal so that you don't forget any of the insight you gain. It may be helpful to document any events that are going on in your life that add to the meaning of the verse for you.

As the years go by, you'll have a rich history of how God has spoken to you.

### **Focused Reflection**

As Christians, we don't meditate on God's Word very much anymore, but the Bible tells us to meditate throughout the Old Testament. The Psalms mention meditation 16 times.

Purposeful meditation is designed to help you build memory webs.

How should we, as Christians, meditate?

While eastern religions encourage centering meditation on yourself, biblical meditation focuses on better understanding God's Word as a way to better understand God, His love for us, and how we fit into His plan.

Meditation can be hard work.

It can be convicting.

But, this focused reflection reveals the splendor of God’s Word.

A few months ago, Sydney gave birth to our first grandchild, Rowan, and I was able to spend the first two weeks of his life helping to care for him.

Every time I held that swaddled little body, I studied him, trying to get to know his temperament, trying to determine which of my other loved ones he most resembled, cherishing the precious moments of his infancy, and reflecting on the time I spent getting to know my own babies.

Although I didn’t realize it at the time, I was meditating on my grandson, studying him, thinking about how much he had added to our family, and looking forward to watching him grow.

If you are memorizing God’s Word with your whole self, as we have discussed and practiced in previous chapters, meditating on the verses you memorize is a natural response, just as studying a new grandbaby is a natural response.

By working through the Personal Reflection section in each of the previous chapters, you have been participating in directed meditation because this form of worship consists of thinking about the meaning of a verse and how it applies to you.

Simply put, meditation is choosing a verse or passage and taking up residence in it.

Dwelling on it and dwelling in it.

One of the first verses I ever used for meditation is the praise portion of Revelation 4:8. In this verse, the four living creatures praise God day and night, saying:

“Holy, holy, holy  
is the Lord God Almighty,  
Who was, and is, and is to come.”

I meditated on this phrase by praying it back to God, picturing myself praising God in His presence. I thought about the words and what they meant.

What is holy?

Why is it repeated three times?

Who is the Lord God Almighty?

Why is He called that?

What does it mean that He was and is and is to come?

As I lived in this verse for a few days, I thought about the lovely symmetry of the words, repeating them over and over again in my mind. Slowly, I began to discover more depth to this song of praise. I believe this verse speaks to the perfection of the Trinity.

Every part of this praise is spoken in 3's, the number which the Jews believe is the symbol of completeness and perfection:<sup>c</sup>

1.                   <sub>1</sub>Holy, <sub>2</sub> holy, <sub>3</sub> holy
2.                   is the <sub>1</sub>Lord <sub>2</sub>God <sub>3</sub>Almighty,
3.                   Who <sub>1</sub>was, and <sub>2</sub>is, and <sub>3</sub>is to come.”

Don't you love the depth of God's Word?

By meditating on Scripture, we give God more opportunities to show us Who He is.

### **Build Verse Webs**

As you meditate on verses you have memorized, you will begin to see how beautifully interwoven the Scriptures are. God will reveal His tapestry of Truth to you.

For one verse, I can have many strands that go out to other verses I've memorized. These strands create an inter-connected web that strengthens my understanding and retention of many verses.

Here's an example of how you can create your own web of the verses and how you can find other, related verses to memorize.

My primary verse, in this example, is Isaiah 55:10-11. A few months after I had memorized this passage, I noticed that Paul had used the same verses in a different context in 2 Corinthians 9:10-11. So, I memorized those verses.



Paul quotes Isaiah 55:10-11 to show how it relates to being generous to others.



Both of these verses talk about sowing. Paul says God will increase the Corinthians' harvest so that they can be generous to others. Jesus says God will provide for you because you are precious to Him.

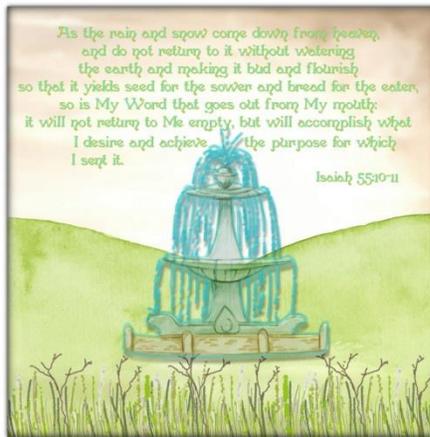


These verses both remind us of God's provision.

Isaiah 55:10-11 reminds me that the Bible often uses water as a metaphor for God. These verses would be good verses to memorize because they all refer to "Living Water."



1. Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. - Isaiah 55:1 (Look into memorizing the entire passage leading up to Isaiah 55:10-11)
2. "But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." - John 4:14
3. Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From His innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. - John 7:37-39
4. Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. Revelation 22:1-2



# Isaiah 55:10-11

The theme of this verse is that God always has a purpose when He sends His Word, and that purpose will always be accomplished.

Other verses that focus on the strength of God's Word.



"Living Water" verses I've already memorized



As I meditated on these passages, I began to see the connections these verses had to others I had memorized. At first these connections were just mental notes I made, but when I wrote the verses down and began to make arrows showing the relationship of one phrase to another, even more verses came to mind. Then, I did a little more Bible study to find other passages I haven't memorized that also fit into my web.

For the sake of simplicity, the illustration above shows just a part of the web I could create with these verses. I included the memory prompts for the verses I have already memorized, and simply wrote the new verses I found so that I could memorize them later.

If you don't have the technology to make a web with images, you can write the verses and use highlighters to color code the ones you have already memorized and those you plan to memorize in the future.

There are many more strands I could include, and I'm sure that if I were to re-visit this web in a few months, I would have many more layers to add to it!

Best of all, drawing out my web gives me a visual image of how these verses fit together, making it easier for me to retain these connections in my mind.

Charlotte was such a clever spider! She made her lovely webs her life's work, and she used her creativity to make others understand the true value of her friend, Wilbur.

In *Charlotte's Web*, the narrator explains, "A spider's web is stronger than it looks. Although it is made of thin, delicate strands, the web is not easily broken. However, a web gets torn every day by the insects that kick around in it, and a spider must rebuild it when it gets full of holes."<sup>a</sup>

Like Charlotte's intricate webs, memory webs must be maintained, but as you care for them through Bible study, meditation, and recitation, they will become stronger and your bond with your marvelous Creator will become stronger too.

Charlotte the spider says, “With the right words, you can change the world.”<sup>b</sup>

The “right words” are God’s words.

Memorize them.

Cherish them.

They will change your world.

<sup>a</sup>WHITE, E. B. *CHARLOTTE'S WEB*. S.I.: HARPERCOLLINS, 2017. Print.

<sup>b</sup>WHITE

<sup>c</sup> “Meaning of Numbers in the Bible The Number 10.” *The Bible Study Site*, Biblestudy.org, [www.biblestudy.org/bibleref/meaning-of-numbers-in-bible/10.html](http://www.biblestudy.org/bibleref/meaning-of-numbers-in-bible/10.html).

**Answer the Questions in Your Notebook for Chapter 11.**