

Cramming for the Final

This title will resonate with anyone who has graduated from High School or college. Perhaps you were of the studious type and kept up with all of your homework and regular assignments so the night before a big exam, you didn't need to "cram" a semester's worth of reading into a few hours. Cramming for a final exam involves intense and last minute studying in an attempt to remember what it was you were *supposed* to be learning.

I was not that motivated in high school. I paid attention for the most part (*when I went*) and knew enough to get by. Gladly, the thirst for knowledge *did* kick in later when I got into law enforcement. It is far easier to retain knowledge and growth in a subject if you remain consistent in your studies, even increasing as you go.

Proverbs 13:4- "The soul of the sluggard desires and *has* nothing, but the soul of the diligent shall be abundantly gratified."

Proverbs 13:16- “Every prudent *man* deals with knowledge, but a fool lays open *his* folly.”

Over this past year, we have covered numerous topics, primarily on salvational issues and character development. Through scripture, God’s Word clearly defines and outlines our path for participation in the First Resurrection. We won’t beleaguer the steps everyone should have committed to memory. We have discussed “His Perfect Will,” “Don’t Look Back,” “The Famine is Here,” “Well Fed,” “Hurdles,” “Train the Trainer,” “Opportunity,” and “Plenty of Time.” All have a common theme and that is to *motivate the believers to action*. Certainly not to run up and down the aisles with a tambourine or calling down the spirit, nor to be banging on doors and handing out pamphlets. They were all geared toward skills and practices to enhance our spiritual growth and relationships with God.

We know, at least by now, we can have all the Bible knowledge (or think we do) and still miss the mark.

2 Timothy 3:1-7- “Know this also, that in *the* last days perilous times shall come; For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, braggarts, proud,

blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, savage, despisers of those who are good, Betrayers, reckless, egotistical, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; Having an outward appearance of godliness, but denying the power of *true* godliness. But *as for you*, turn away from *all* these. For from *men such as* these come those who are worming their way into houses and are gaining control over empty-headed *gullible* women given over to *various* sins, *being* driven by all kinds of lust. **They are always learning but are never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.**”

We have often made light of some of the T.V. Preachers and their theatrics. They may have an exceptional knowledge of scripture, but they cannot spiritually discern God’s Word because of their failure to obey His Commandments.

1 Corinthians 2:12-14- “Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that *is* of God, so that we might know the things graciously given to us by God, Which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in *words* taught by *the* Holy Spirit *in order to* communicate spiritual things by spiritual *means*. But *the* natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of

God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand *them* because they are spiritually discerned.”

God has given us such a tremendous *gift and opportunity* for eternal life through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ. This gift to us was free but was paid for with the highest cost ever given. Giving our lives back to the One Who purchased them is part of our responsibility. Our growth and service to Him must begin here and now while we are in this life. This is our “study hall” period in preparation for the Final Exam to be given at the First Resurrection. The reward of salvation depends upon our passing the final exam. It will take us the rest of our lives to prepare.

We have been given the sacrifice and example of Jesus Christ to follow. We have the full and complete Word of God in our Bibles. We have God’s Holy Spirit in us *if* we are baptized. There may be only one question on the final exam. God may simply ask us, “What did you do with what I gave you?” Did we serve Him and others? Did we grow in our relationship with Him? Did we grow in the likeness of His Son? These are inquiries we can ask ourselves when answering that one question.

Isaiah 60:1- “Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you,”

Matthew 5:14-16- “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Neither do they light a lamp and put it under a bushel basket, but on the lampstand; and it shines for all who *are* in the house. In the same way also, you are to let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works, and may glorify your Father Who *is* in heaven.”

Having this light in us from God, we are not to bury it so no one can see it. At the same time, we are not to flaunt it and draw attention to glorify ourselves.

Luke 11:33-35- “Now no one who lights a lamp sets it in a secret place or under a bushel basket, but on a lampstand, so that those who are entering may see the light. The light of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is without guile, your whole body is light; but when your eye is evil, your body also is dark. Therefore, beware that the light that is in you is not darkness.”

God *will* deal with those who squander His Word and gifts. We have all been given talents and gifts according to His will. How we use them is measured from the

motives in our hearts in our service to God and others. God is extremely specific in His word what happens if we fail to meet His standards.

Matthew 25:19-30- “Now after a long time, the lord of those servants came to take account with them. Then the one who had received five talents came to *him and* brought an additional five talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered five talents to me; see, I have gained five other talents besides them.’ And his lord said to him, **‘Well done, good and faithful servant! Because you were faithful over a few things, I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’** And the one who had received two talents also came to him *and* said, ‘Lord, you delivered to me two talents; see, I have gained two other talents besides them.’ His lord said to him, **‘Well done, good and faithful servant! Because you were faithful over a few things, I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’** Then the one who had received the single talent also came to *him and* said, ‘Lord, I knew that you are a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter. And *because* I was afraid, **I went and hid your talent on the earth. Now look, you have your own.**’ His lord answered *and* said to him, **‘You wicked and lazy servant!** You knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather what I did not scatter. Because *you knew* this, you were duty-bound to take my talent to the money exchangers, *so that* when I came, I could have received my

own with interest. Therefore, take the talent from him, and give it to the one who has ten talents. For to everyone who has, *more* shall be given, and *he* shall have abundance; on the other hand, *as for* the one who does not have, even that which he has shall be taken from him. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness.’ There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

It is important to remember to use what we have been given to glorify God and edify others. We spoke of this when we discussed opportunities, whether they were *unique* or *missed*.

2 Timothy 1:6-7- “For this reason, I admonish you *to stir up the gift of God that is in you* by the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of sound mindedness.”

God will grade us on our final exam by what we have written in our hearts *and* how we have put it to use in serving Him and others. He *will* know the motives in each of us.

1 John 3:18-20- “My little children, we should not love in word, nor with our tongues; rather, we should love in deed and in truth. And in this way we know that

we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him, That if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts and knows all things.”

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13- “Now may the Lord make you to exceed and to abound in love toward one another and toward all, even as we also *abound in love* toward you, That your hearts may be established blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.”

The final exam will probably be an oral exam, one in which we kneel before the Teacher and answer His questions. Study time is long over, and He already knows the answers to what is asked. We will all give account to God.

Romans 14:10-12- “Now then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you despise your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ Because it is written, ” ‘For *as* I live,’ says *the* Lord, ‘every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.’ ” So then, each one of us shall give account of himself to God.”

Romans 2:1-2- “Therefore you are without excuse, O man, everyone who judges *another*; for in that in which you judge the other, you are condemning your own

self; for you who judge *another* are doing the same things. But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth upon those who commit such things.”

Our actions and service here on Earth are fulfilling our passing grade if we are rightly motivated in keeping God’s Word.

1 Thessalonians 1:5- “*Your faith and endurance are* a visible testimony of the righteous judgment of God, so that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.”

Ecclesiastes 12:12-14- “And further, by these, my son, be warned. Of the making of many books there is no end, and much study *is* a weariness of the flesh. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments. For this *is* the whole man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, concerning every secret thing, whether *it is* good, or whether it is evil.”

Taking notes, using a highlighter, or underlying scripture is a terrific way to emphasize key scriptures that may resonate within us. However, the most effective way of recall without using a Sharpie permanent marker is to write God’s Word in

our hearts. Not just for memory but for *action*, for *recall* and that *ready answer*.

Live by every word as an example to those around you.

2 Corinthians 3:3- “*For* it is manifest that you are Christ’s epistle, ministered by us; you were not inscribed with *pen and ink*, but with *the Spirit of the living God*; not on tablets of stone, but on fleshly tablets of *the heart*.”

Hebrews 10:16- ““This *is* the covenant that I will establish with them after those days,’ says *the Lord*: ‘I will give My laws into their hearts, and I will inscribe them in their minds;”

1 John 2:20- “But you have *the* anointing from the Holy One, and you have knowledge of all things *pertaining to salvation*.”

The desire for serving God and others must come from our hearts. We must love, trust, and obey God with *all our hearts*, Him and Him alone. Seek God in *His word first*, through prayer and His Holy Spirit.

1 Peter 4:10-11- “*Let* each one, according as he has received a gift from God, *be using* it to serve the others as good stewards of the grace of God *which* manifests

itself in various ways. **If anyone speaks, let it be as the words of God; if anyone serves, let it be as from the strength which God supplies; so that in everything, God may be glorified through Jesus Christ to Whom is the glory and the power into the ages of eternity. Amen.**”

Seeking God is deeply personal. It goes beyond playing videos, watching YouTube, or listening to another pastor. ***It must be you, the individual,*** seeking Him, one on One. There is no harm or anything detrimental by researching, reading, studying, or even a mid-week study from other sources *from within* God’s own servants. God does not expect us to become a recluse or a hermit, but He does tell us to “Come out from among them.” (2 Corinthians 6:17)

1 Corinthians 14:26- “What is it then, brethren? When you assemble together, each of you has a psalm, has a doctrine, has a language, has a revelation, *or* has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.”

Galatians 6:8-10- “For the one who sows to his own flesh shall reap corruption from the flesh. But the one who sows to the Spirit shall reap eternal life from the Spirit. Now we should not lose heart *in* doing well because we who do not faint

will reap in due time. So then, as we have *opportunity*, we should do good to all, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

God doesn't want us to remain just as we were when He called us. ***If*** we ever lose the internet or You Tube, we will have our very own permanent scriptural library deep in our hearts. While there is nothing wrong with listening to “other” sources during the week, depending on where they come from, ***it is not the same thing as talking directly to God yourself! Just because we listen to something does not mean He knows us.*** It is far better to go to the Supreme Source. Remember the story of Lazarus and the rich man in **Luke 16:19-29**? From the grave, the rich man cried out to Abraham rather than to God. He did not know God. You can hold a file next to a knife, but it will not get any sharper without direct contact. It is that simple. We can go through the motions, make a great appearance, and still miss the mark ***if*** we fail to keep His standards and develop that One on one relationship He requires.

Each of us who are blessed to have fulfilled our creation purpose according to God’s will, who remain alive at His return or those asleep in their graves will be resurrected at the sound of the seventh trump and rise from the dead to meet Christ in the air.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52- “Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed, In an instant, in *the* twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for *the* trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18- “For this we say to you by *the* Word of *the* Lord, that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall in no wise precede those who have fallen asleep, Because the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with *a* shout of command, with *the* voice of an archangel and with *the* trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in *the* clouds for *the* meeting with the Lord in *the* air; and so shall we always be with *the* Lord. Therefore, encourage one another with these words.”

We can know the Bible and spout scriptures but if we are not living and doing what we are told in it, we are nothing more than clanging cymbals. We must be doers of the word and not just hearers.

James 1:21-25- “Therefore, having rid yourselves of all filthiness and all *the* abounding wickedness around you, then in meekness accept for yourselves the

implanted Word, which is able to save your lives. Then be doers of *the* Word, and not only hearers, deceiving your own selves Because if anyone is a hearer of *the* Word and not a doer, this one is like a man considering his natural face in a mirror Who, after looking at himself, went away and immediately forgot what he was like. But the one who has looked into *the* perfect law of freedom, and has continued in *it*, this one himself has not become a forgetful hearer, but is a doer of *the* work. This one shall be blessed in his actions.”

We can have more degrees than a thermometer and have read enough books to fill a library, but without the personal relationship with God, and a humble and contrite spirit, we cannot receive the “implanted word” that James refers to listed above. We can go through the motions and play church all we want but, in the end, we might just hear those terrible words, “And then I will confess to them, ‘I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who work lawlessness.’”- **Matthew 7:23**.

Using the knowledge and wisdom from God’s Word and applying it in our service to Him is the best way to study for the final. We must know the material for ourselves. I never fared well in school handing in someone else’s homework, and I *always* got caught if I cheated on a test. God is far better than my ninth grade English teacher at observation.

We will not forget what we were taught through God's Holy Spirit (**Luke 12:11-12**). God's word is alive in us as is His Spirit. We are called to serve others and reflect on the gifts we have been given as so many *will not* receive this knowledge until the Millennial Kingdom. ***If*** we fail in this, we will miss the mark. It is as straightforward as that. If you are already baptized and fail, there is no make-up exam or summer school. We know the outcome. This is why our training and spiritual growth is so critical ***now***.

“Now I lay me down to rest, I pray to the Lord I pass this test. If I should die before I wake, that's one less test I'll have to take.” I wrote this on the back of a Social Studies test in seventh grade. My favorite teacher read it aloud and it got a good chuckle from the class.

But this is one exam we won't know we passed until we *are* resurrected. We do not know how much time we have left, nor do we know when Christ will return. He repeatedly tells us to ***watch*** throughout the Gospels. Our time to “cram” is ***now***. It will not involve the panic we once had in school, as we will have God's peace that surpasses all understanding and the knowledge of His love and promises. We have the example of Jesus Christ to follow.

2 Corinthians 1:20- “For whatever promises of God *there are*, in Him *is* the yes, and in Him the Amen, with glory to God by us.” Amen.

BL-09/05/26