

What Is in Your Heart Library?

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:11).

When I was growing up, I enjoyed going to the library. I remember thinking that if I ever got caught out somewhere during a blizzard, I hoped it would be the local library. It seemed like I never had enough books to read. I would read the ones I had over and over; they never grew old.

Whenever I dreamed about what my future home would look like, I wanted an entire room full of books, my own personal library. I began to collect a variety of books that I hoped to one day put in my dream library. I had classics, like Nancy Drew books and Little House on the Prairie books. As a teenager, I purchased an entire set of encyclopedias, one volume at a time from the local grocery store. I collected a large number of old comic books, and I had many devotional books. Along with several Bibles, I also began collecting old books that had good Bible teachings.

Once I began high school, the library became an even more important place to me. Those were the days before the internet, the days of the library card catalog. Finding information for term papers took a lot longer back then. For the first time, I went to the basement of the library where archived magazines and reference materials were stored. I spent hours doing research using those books and magazines.

As I grew older, I learned the importance of being selective concerning the materials I had collected. I learned that you cannot trust a book by its cover. Often the most colorful, eye-catching covers do not contain good quality stories. So, those had to be thrown away. More than once I re-evaluated my collection of books, asking myself if the book was helpful, did it have anything questionable in it, and was it something I would one day want my children to read?

Today, although I do not have an entire room full of books, I do have many bookcases throughout my home with the books that I have kept. These are the ones I felt were valuable enough to save all these years, books that I have shared with my children, family, and friends.

Psalm 119:11 speaks of hiding God's Word in our hearts. Did you know that you have a heart library? Each one of us is storing up what we read and learn in this unseen library. What are you putting on the shelves of this library? It is important that you are selective when it comes to determining your heart library's contents. Who you are is determined by what you allow to be placed here.

What would you think if you visited your public library or school library and found its shelves full of junk mail or blank papers or trash? Would it be a valuable resource? What if the shelves were only filled with useless games and videos? Would you consider it a place to gain knowledge or a place to just waste time?

Whether a library is useful and reliable or not depends on what people have chosen to place inside of it. Likewise, the usefulness and reliability of your heart library is determined by what you are placing on its shelves.

What resources are vitally important for a heart library? First, you must memorize Bible Scriptures. You cannot place a literal Bible on the shelves of your heart library. The only way to get it into your heart is through your eyes and ears (reading and hearing). There might be times when you cannot open a Bible and read it or share it with someone, but if it has been stored in your heart library, it is always accessible.

Another reason you need Bible verses in your library is also found in Psalm 119:11, which says, ". . . that I might not sin against thee." Right in the middle of a temptation to do wrong, God will reach down into your heart library and pull out a verse you have memorized to help you resist that temptation. When Jesus was tempted by the devil, He said, "It is written." Jesus was able to overcome temptation because He knew what the Word of God said.

Have you ever read your Bible and not understood what a verse meant? Store that in your heart library. In God's time, He will give you understanding. Later, you might be reading somewhere else in the Bible, and God will bring that hard-to-understand verse to your memory. Then it will make sense.

Bible verses can be like a spiritual GPS. My personal library has an atlas (collection of maps) as part of the encyclopedia set. Although this is somewhat outdated, it has provided direction for our travels on several occasions. What reference materials are you storing in your heart library that will provide spiritual guidance for your life? There are going to be times when you have no idea what decision to make or which way to go.

Jeremiah 30:21 promises, "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." If you have been storing up God's Word in your heart, you will recognize His voice. God gives direction through His Word.

Another important reason you should have Scriptures stored in your heart library is to help you when you have an

opportunity to witness. Do you wonder what you will say if someone asks you about God or why you believe the way you do? Store up God's Word in your heart. When the time comes to witness, God will show you exactly what reference material you should use. He will help you know what to say. But if you have placed very few Scriptures on your library's shelves, what will God have to choose from?

What else should a heart library contain? Just as a literal library would be incomplete without books of knowledge (such as encyclopedias), your heart library needs spiritual knowledge as well. Paul wrote to Timothy that he was "not ashamed" because he knew "whom I have believed" (1 Timothy 1:12).

The years of your youth are a vital time to begin to build your core beliefs. Why do you believe as you do? Why do you do certain things and not do others? Are you convinced that lying, cheating, and stealing are wrong? Do you believe in God? Who is God? Who is God to you? Do you know how to lead a sinner to Christ? If you never selectively chose materials that will build your core beliefs, spiritual junk mail and trash might fill your shelves instead.

Where might you find good materials to build your core beliefs? Again, the Bible is a great place to start. Also, family devotions, Sunday school, youth group, and church services are other great opportunities. Be sure to attend and pay attention. Ask questions when you do not understand. Allow your library to expand with spiritual knowledge.

You would be surprised to visit a literal library and not find books about history. Yet, too many heart libraries are missing this vital section. Do you know the stories of the Bible? There are so many life lessons to be learned from these, seemingly, basic stories. Sadly, many of today's young people know very few Bible stories. We read in 1 Corinthians 10:11 that these were written down for examples, and John 20:31 tells us another reason they were written: "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

What other history materials would be helpful to include in your heart library? Do you know how God's church (the Church of God) began? Who purchased it and how? How does one become a member? Do you know the stories of how God's people have faced persecution and even death, especially during the Dark Ages? What about the local congregation where you attend worship services? Do you know the story about its beginnings?

Do you know the story of how your parents or grandparents received Christ? Did they face persecution or obstacles when they first were saved? Are there stories of God working out hard circumstances in their lives or stories of healings? Do you know your family's spiritual history?

Why is knowing history so important? It will give you a greater appreciation for the Godly heritage your family is endeavoring to pass down to you. You can also learn from history, not repeating the mistakes of others. Talk to your family members who are saved and ask questions. Store those stories of spiritual history in your heart library.

No library is complete without a media section. What is in the media section of your heart library? Do you have music stored there? If so, what kind of music are you placing on its shelves? Many people have found great comfort during difficult places in their lives by remembering songs of encouragement. Job 35:10 tells us that God gives "songs in the night." Paul and Silas experienced this when they were in the inner prison. Acts 16:25 tells us that at "midnight" they "prayed, and sang praises unto God."

If you are storing songs of encouragement and songs of praise in your heart library, God will bring those to your memory in the darkest times of your life. However, if those shelves have very few good songs, you might miss out on the encouragement you need.

Failing to selectively choose the material for your heart library does not mean the shelves will be empty. You have an enemy who is doing his best to make sure you have all the wrong materials stored up. You are hearing words and songs every day, many of which have no business in the heart library of a Christian. Many times you cannot help what you hear. For instance, someone might swear and you hear it. Now that word is trying to take up residence on a shelf in your library. What should you do?

For years there was a free box of books and other materials at our local library. These were old or worn out or for some reason no longer able to be used. By taking regular inventory of all their materials, libraries are able to determine what needs to be replaced, repaired, or removed.

Regular inventory of your heart library is a must if you want to make sure there are good quality materials on its shelves. You will need help with this, for the devil knows how to hide things in your library. Ask God to search your heart. David wrote in Psalm 139:23, "Search me, O God, and know my heart." Is there anything that should not be there? Is there anything missing from your heart library?

Do not be deceived into thinking that because others cannot see your heart library, they will never know what is on its shelves. Matthew 12:34 warns us that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." If it is in your heart, in time it will come out. If you have allowed the devil to fill it with trash, do not be surprised when it slips out

through your words or actions.

Be selective when choosing the contents of your heart library, but do not procrastinate. Studies have shown that memorization is easier when you are young. Store up Scriptures in your heart. Fill it full of Bible stories, spiritual truths, Godly songs, and stories of encouragement. Just as you are what you eat physically, so you are what you take in spiritually.

As God looks on the shelves of your heart library, what does He see? Do you need to have an inventory of its contents? Are you lacking spiritual reference material? Let God help you create a heart library that is pleasing to Him.

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