



Hide This In Your Heart – 2 Timothy 3:14-16

Sunday 22 November 2020

Before You Begin

Our hope is that this is a resource that will help us to engage meaningfully with God’s word and invite us into a sense of worship, despite being unable to meet face-to-face. Use it in a way that feels comfortable and helpful to you.

A table of contents has been added to give you a sense of what will follow and allow you to move more easily through the worship elements.

Prepare

Have your Bible close by and some food and drink prepared for communion. It doesn’t have to be bread and grape juice; it could be whatever is available (tea and a biscuit) to use in this symbolic time.

Get into a ‘Sacred’ Space

Be intentional. Sit somewhere. Have some visual representation of God (perhaps a small cross, your Bible, a symbol or image) or you might play some reflective music. Start with a few moments of silence and deep breathing.

Consider your environment

What will work for you in the space you have? If you have others in your house (housemates/family), consider sharing this time with them, each reading or participating as appropriate. You might simply reflect individually, in your own time and space. Afterwards, you might connect with others through technology to share your reflections, or an encouragement, with them.



What’s Inside

On a computer, you can click these links

A Title “Heading 1”

Song: Title

Bible Reading: Psalm 139 (NIV)

Message

Communion

Prayer

Connect cards online

Call to Worship

Penny Martin

Welcome to worship! This week we are privileged to have Graham Joseph Hill, Principal of Stirling Theological College, sharing a message with our community. Graham is a great speaker and the author of multiple books, the most recent of which he co-authored with Michael Frost entitled *Hide This in Your Heart. Memorising Scripture for Kingdom Impact*.

Graham is a strong advocate for the power of practices to transform our personal spiritual lives and the lives of our communities for God's Kingdom. His message today is based around the theme from his book and invites each of us to take seriously the challenges of practical discipleship.

Bible Reading: Psalm 119:11 and 2 Timothy 3:14-16 (NIV)

If you are with others perhaps take turns to read different sections

Psalm 119:11

"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."

2 Timothy 3:14-16

"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness."

THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV®
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Are You Interested in Studying?

Penny Martin

Now could be the right time to consider going deeper into your knowledge of the Bible, to learn new skills in counselling or to engage with like-minded people around areas of practical discipleship and leadership. Stirling is a world class College offering a range of courses that will challenge and inspire your faithful engagement in the world.

If you want to discover more, the **Stirling Virtual Open Week** is a wonderful opportunity to learn about study at the College.

From Tuesday 24 November to Saturday 28 November 2020 jump online to discover our Bible and theology, mission and ministry, counselling and other courses. Connect with students, faculty, and the rest of the College community.

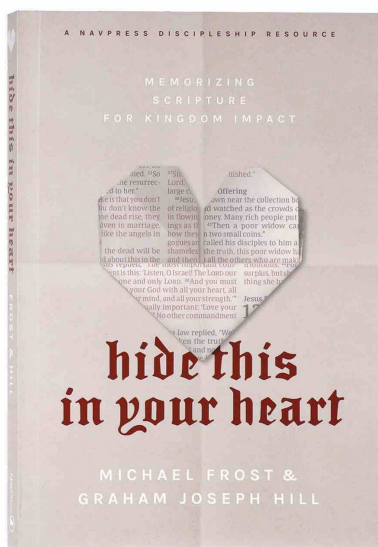
It could be your chance to start a new adventure in learning and faith.

Go to: <https://open.stirling.edu.au> to register and find out more.

Message

Graham Hill

Recently Michael Frost and I wrote a book called *Hide this in Your Heart*, which is about memorising scripture in order to have a passionate, radical, devotional, prayerful, world-changing Christian life. This book has lots of resources in it including some memory cards so that you can begin to focus on what it means to be God's person, inspired by scripture to follow Jesus wherever He might take you in life.



Today I thought it might be good for us to look at Psalm 119: 11 where the title of this book comes from. Michael frost and I have called this book *Hide this in Your Heart*, and Psalm 119:11 says these words: *“I've hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you”*. In fact psalm 119, if you were to paraphrase it, would be about what it means to hide God's word deeply in your heart, so that you can live a blameless and pure life, so that you can live a life that is full of prayer and devotion, so that your life can be one that is radical, activist, prophetic and make a great difference in the world.

Psalm 119 is about the psalmist's passion for God, his desire for God to change and transform his life and his commitment to the idea that God reveals God's self through the words of scripture and shapes our lives so that our lives make a difference in the world. So today I want us to look at Psalm 119:11 and 2 Timothy 3 as well and ask, 'What does it mean to hide God's word in our heart?' 'How does that change our lives and make us passionate for Jesus Christ, passionate for his gospel, passionate for mission and passionate for transforming the world?'

When I first became a Christian, I was committed to all kinds of radical things. I remember I became a Christian in my late teens and it was a radical conversion to Jesus Christ. My mates and I would spend time in all-night prayer meetings, we would fast regularly but I've noticed recently how some of that early passion for Jesus has died away. And as I begin to read the Psalms and pray about 'What does it mean to live a passionate spiritual life? the Psalms have reminded me that spiritual enthusiasm, desire for God, passion for His word, a commitment to being connected with God, and enlivened in every area of our lives in order to proclaim God's news to the world, is normal. I mean listen to the words of the Psalms. The Psalmist says things like, *“as the deer longs for streams of living water, so my soul longs for you”*, *“my soul thirsts for you”*, *“I earnestly seek after you”*, *“my soul desires you”*, *“my body longs for you in a dry and weary land where there is no water”*. The Psalmist says, *“this one thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek, that I might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life; to gaze on his beauty and to seek him in his temple”*. The Psalmist says, *“my eyes stay open through the watches of the night that I might meditate on your promises”*.

And C.S. Lewis says this is the Psalmist's hunger for God. In fact, Lewis says to call this the Psalmist's 'love' for God or 'desire' for God is not quite strong enough. Lewis says the Psalmist, 'hungers' for God, he 'yearns' for God with every part of his being. And Psalm 119 he says that it's the word of God living and active and powerful in his spirit that drives his desire for God, that shapes a pure and blameless life, that gives him an orientation towards God that really makes a difference in the world; a radical, activist, prophetic, world-changing life.

When I think about my early days of Christianity, I wonder, 'Where did my passion for God go?' 'When did I stop praying all night?' 'When did I stop weeping for the lost?' 'When did my eyes become dry?' 'My heart cold?' 'My prayers devoid of their passion?' 'When did I lose something of my passion for God that was present in my early days of Christian faith?' Now I don't want to beat myself up too much because I think one of the normal progressions in Christian faith is a deepening maturity and a deepening sense that passion for God is expressed in more than one way. But I will say that one of the problems in Christian life is that sometimes we lose some of our passion for God and for faith that we had in the early days.

Today I just want to share that I believe that hiding God's Word in your heart and letting God's Word become internalised deeply within your spirit begins to shape who you are. It begins to shape your desire for God and your orientation in life.

It's those who are passionate for God and committed to God's word that make a radical and significant difference in life, difference in the church, and difference in society. When did we become afraid of passion in this spiritual life?

In 1746 Jonathan Edwards, one of the greatest American theologians of his era at least, and probably of all time, wrote a book called *The Religious Affections*. Now that's an old-fashioned way of talking about being spiritually passionate. Jonathan Edwards said that one of the chief works of Satan is to promote the idea that spiritual enthusiasm and passion is something to be afraid of, something to be guarded against. In fact, Jonathan Edwards, and remember he was a great theologian so he was a man of the mind, he said, "*just as there is no true Christian faith where there is nothing but passion and enthusiasm, so too there was no true Christian faith where there is no enthusiasm for God.*" He said "*if the great things of the gospel of Jesus Christ are apprehended fully and comprehensively, how can they not enliven the spirit? How can they not make us passionate? After all we have a gospel that changes the world, the defining story of all of human history. How can it not make us passionate for God and passionate for His word?*" I believe that hiding God's word in your heart enlivens our spiritual life; restores our spiritual passion.

I think there are three things for us to understand as we consider this. The first one is this: as I've suggested, God wants your faith to be alive and passionate. This comes through all through scripture, not just in the Psalms. So, Romans 12:11 says, "*be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*", or Deuteronomy 10:12 says, "*but now what does God require of you? That you would love Him and serve Him and desire after Him with all of your heart and all of your soul.*" Deuteronomy 6:4-5 says, "*hear what the Lord our God would say; love the Lord your God with all of your might and with all of your heart.*" In fact, when you look through scripture and it describes what the spiritual life is

like, it often paints analogies that are almost physical, like wrestling with a strong opponent, running a race, warring against a city. All of the analogies that are painted in scripture about the spiritual life are analogies about full physical, spiritual, intellectual exertion. It's about giving yourself fully to God and what God would do in the world.

Now imagine if you're going to the Olympic games and you're a Greco-Roman wrestler, and you're going to come up against a 300-pound Russian wrestler. His eyes are bloodshot, his back is covered in hair, you can tell all he wants to do is just rub your face into the mat. At that very moment you think to yourself, 'I wish I had prepared a little bit more for this physical contest!' In scripture, the spiritual life is described as a contest, as an activity of great exertion where you don't want to go in half prepared. You don't want to go in half-hearted. The lackadaisical, the half-hearted, those who are kind of ho-hum about the spiritual life, will not survive this spiritual battle and will not make a deep impact on the world. So, the Bible uses all sorts of analogies that draw our attention to this very fact. So, what do we do about that? Well I think we need to press into the Holy Spirit. It's not by might, nor by power, nor by my own will, nor my own determination or efforts, that I'll get that I'll become spiritually passionate and follow Jesus. It's by the grace of God, the power of God in the spiritual life.

Life is an experience that knocks you around. I'm a body surfer and I regularly go out into the ocean and swim. I turned 50 a couple of years ago and my family remind me that I'm getting old, that I'm a 'fossil'. They often say to me, "You know what Dad, or Graham, don't keep putting yourself in danger when you go out into the ocean. You're not as young as you were once were. You're not as fit as you once were. You're getting old! Don't put yourself in a situation of danger." But I can't help myself. I'll often go out into the ocean and I'll be body surfing and, even though I'm a pretty good swimmer, there'll be occasions where I wonder whether I'm going to die. Those of you that have kind of been involved in body surfing or surfing in great waves will know what the experience is like. You get smashed by a huge wave and you claw your way up through the water for air and another wave smashes you down, and you claw your way up for air again and another wave smashes you down, and you think to yourself, 'This is where I die. There's no hope for me in this moment.' Somehow you get through but you're not always sure that you will. Well, life can be like that. I regularly come across people where it looks like life has smashed them down. They claw up for air and another wave smashes them down, they claw up for air and another wave smashes them down. You think, 'How is it that that one person could go through so much suffering?'

Even though life can beat us up, can be difficult and painful, our hearts can be broken, our expectations can be shattered, we can struggle with relationships and career and all sorts of things, the Bible tells us that it's the presence and power of God in our lives - God's presence, power, provision - that sustains us, that allow us to maintain a passionate spiritual life, regardless of what life might throw at us. So, number one: God wants our faith to be passionate and alive, and we often find the resources for that in the power of the Holy Spirit and by going into God's Word.

The second thing I would say is that consuming God's word restores our spiritual passion. In fact, 2 Timothy 3:14-16 reminds us that the Bible does this. The first thing that Paul says to Timothy is, 'remember those who have gone before, the people that have gone before, who've struggled for faith, who've loved God with all of their heart, who've given you an example of the spiritual life. Remember those people and follow their example.' In fact, Paul says in another place, "*imitate me as I imitate Christ.*" Paul says, "*Remember those who've gone before and their love for God, their*

commitment to the gospel and their commitment to God's word." And then he says, *"Remember that if you embrace scripture, it's living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword."* He says that scripture is not human-made but God-breathed. The origin of the Bible and its words come out of the very heart of God and they point us back to Jesus Christ and His gospel and His word. Scripture is living and active. It's God breathed! It's useful for correction and growth, and rebuke and encouragement. Remember the power of God's word. I'm stunned, you know, when you read the words of scripture what you discover is that the spiritual life is described in very vivid terms. All sorts of words are used like fear, hope, hatred, joy, gratitude, compassion, sorrow, zeal. If we ever wondered whether the spiritual life is meant to be alive and vibrant, well we only need to go into the passages of scripture to see that that is the case.

In 1990 I spent six months in India staying at a Bible college and studying with Indian students. We'd be woken up at 4am, we'd go down and pray from 4:30-7am. We'd spend our time in prayer before breakfast, then we would study scripture, then we'd go out doing evangelism and mission on the streets. It was during those months of staying in a Bible college in India that I learnt what passionate faith looks like. Where I learnt what it meant to start your day with hours of prayer, being immersed in God's word, pressing into God and then discovering that biblical study and passionate Christian witness often emerges out of the power of scripture.

My grandfather was a missionary to Sydney and when I was about 11 or 12 years old, I would often stay at his house. My grandfather ministered to the most broken people of Sydney. My grandfather became a Christian on a ship on the journey from Scotland. He became a Christian and was very committed to faith and in the early days he became committed to the idea that God had called him to work amongst drug addicts, alcoholics, prostitutes, the most poor and broken of the early Sydney colony. When I was 11 or 12, I would stay in his house, and I still remember all sorts of people would be in my grandfather's house. It was an open home. The most broken and lost and rejected of society found a place where they could be loved and accepted in my grandfather's house.

One day, when I was about 12, I remember staying at my grandfather's house and hearing the sound of sobbing. I walked downstairs and there was my grandfather, early in the morning, kneeling beside the couch, weeping over an open Bible. He looked up at me with his face covered in tears and he said to me, *"Graham, whatever you do in life, don't stop going deeply into the Word of God. It's in the Word of God that you'll find the presence, the power, the passion and the provision that God has for you."* He said, *"Graeme, all of your days love Jesus, meet Jesus in His Word and love the world for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ."* It's those moments that have a deep impression on you, don't they? They had a powerful impression on me. My grandfather taught me that love for God's word that love for Jesus and love for the world, all of these things go hand in hand. So we're reminded that going into the word of God enlivens our spirit, renews our mind, and enables us to combine a prophetic, radical, activist faith - with spiritual maturity as well - and helps us develop the kind of spiritual resources that are required to truly be God's people.

Let me just talk about that for a moment. It's easy for us to be led astray in life. All of the materialism, the consumerism, the desires of this age, are always trying to get us to desire them, to love them and not to love Christ. I do a lot of counselling with people, and often with Christian leaders whose lives have fallen apart. Often it looks like they've had a sudden implosion and you think 'how did that Christian leader go from being someone who was an example of godliness, to

somebody whose life was broken and exposed in front of the whole world?' I think the analogy is like a 'sinkhole syndrome'. You know that in America and other parts of the world, there are sinkholes that happen. A sinkhole is where there's this great artesian lake under a part of the city, it dries up and then the buildings that are built on that part of the lake collapse. You know the ground can't hold their weight anymore, and they collapse in on themselves. You discover that all of that building, all of that structure was built upon a hollow, vacuous, weak part of the land that was always going to collapse in on itself. I think sometimes Christian life can be like that. Sometimes you'll see a Christian life fall apart but what you discover is that for all of the externals, for all of the appearance of godliness and righteousness, there was nothing supporting it. There was nothing deep and rich and solid and Godly underneath. But that's what prayer, that's what pressing into Christ, that's what the word of God does, it builds a solid base and enables us to live a life that is able to weather the storms.

I think the other thing that the word of God does is it helps us to develop a kind of self-mastery. Remember that we're always being led by the devil by the world to pursue and desire other things and to live lives that reflect the morality or the ethics of the world, rather than the morality and the ethics of Christ and God's word. There's a parable that I heard when I was traveling in Africa and it goes something like this:

Once a great lion prowled through the jungle and when it would come across a lesser animal it would look at that animal and say, 'Who, giraffe, is the king of the jungle?' And the giraffe would tremble and say, 'You, mighty lion, are the king of the jungle.' The lion would prowl through the jungle doing this to every creature that it came across. One day it came across an elephant and said, 'Who, elephant, is the king of the jungle?' The elephant, without saying a word, wrapped its trunk around the lion's torso, lifted it off the ground and smashed it against the tree. The lion, broken against the tree, looks up at the elephant and says, 'Just because you don't know the answer doesn't mean you have to lose your temper.'

You know often in Christian life, Christian leaders are tempted to dominate, control, impress, influence, intimidate. We're called to love, to serve, to exercise self-mastery, self-control, to be a people of humility and spiritual depth for the sake of Christ, for the sake of the word of God, for the sake of spiritual maturity. We're all called to do that. Don't be tempted to the external life to the exclusion, or the loss, of a deep inner life.

The third thing I'd like to say is that Jesus empowers us, in fact he's our example, of the passionate life dedicated to God's word. It shouldn't escape our attention that when Jesus is under pressure, he quotes scripture. In fact, there's an occasion in scripture where the Pharisees try to trick him. They say to him, 'You know Jesus, there are many occasions when somebody divorces and then they remarry. Now when they go to heaven who will they be married to? The first or the second partner?' They're trying to trip Jesus up. They're trying to expose him as someone who doesn't really know the Word of God. Jesus looks at them and he says to them, 'your problem religious leaders is twofold: firstly, you don't know the scriptures, and secondly, you don't know the power of God'. Jesus tells them, if you knew God and you knew God's power, you would know the scriptures are not about legalism and regulations and rules, they're about life, about fullness of life, about freedom for people. God's word is given that we might have communion with God and that we might see the world transformed for the sake of the gospel. Your problem, religious leaders, is that you don't know the scriptures nor the power of God. Then the Sadducees are a bit annoyed.

They've been embarrassed publicly, so they confer together and then they say to Jesus, 'Well if you're so clever, what's the most important scripture?' and Jesus says to them, 'Well it's this. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength, and love your neighbour as yourself'. All of the commands, all of the words of scripture, all the promises of God, are wrapped up in this, 'love God and love your neighbour as you love yourself.' Jesus says, 'If you knew God's power and God's word, you would know that it's a message of liberation and hope and fullness'. Jesus serves as our example and we see so many instances where Jesus quotes scripture. He's in the desert, he's being tempted and what does he do? He quotes scripture. He's challenged by adversaries and what does he do? He quotes and reframes scripture. He grew up in an environment where scripture became a part of his spirit and then, knowing God, he lived that out fully. When we go to John 11-16, we see Jesus constantly quoting scripture as he goes towards the cross as well.

So, what do we do with this? I say we should go to the gospels. Often I suggest people take the 30-day gospel challenge. It sounds like an ad for a cereal or something doesn't it! Take the 30-day gospel challenge, go to the gospels and for 30 days immerse yourself in the gospels. Ask what does Jesus talk about? Who does he spend his time with? What does he love? What stirs up his energy? What is he passionate about? What breaks his heart? Go into the gospels and see how does Jesus love God? How does he love the broken? How is he committed to God's Word? Ask God to change your heart so that you'll be like Him.

I want to finish by looking at the words of Revelation 3, the words of the spirit of God to the church in Laodicea. Often when we quote these words, we quote them in evangelistic context but in fact they are words of the spirit of God to the church of God. They say this, "*these are the words of the amen, the faithful and true, the ruler of God's creation. I know your deeds, that you're neither hot nor cold. I wish you were one or the other! So because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I want to spit you out of my mouth. You say I'm rich but you're poor. I'm clothed but you're naked. I'm important but you're not. Come to me! Behold I stand at the door and knock; I want to come in and I want to eat with you.*"

I confess I've got a bit of a caffeine addiction. I think when we get to heaven there will be streams of Coke Zero and streams of coffee. I've got a little bit of a problem, I know. I like to always have a cold form of caffeine available to me, usually in the form of Coke Zero (which I think is a nectar of heaven) or a beautiful barista-made coffee available at all times. It's a bit of a problem, pray for me! I think when we get to heaven, we won't drink water, we're going to drink Coke Zero and coffee. But here's the thing, even Coke Zero, if you leave it in your car and it goes lukewarm, even that exquisite drink becomes foul. When Coke Zero is lukewarm, it's disgusting! You want to spit it out of your mouth. Or even a beautiful coffee, made by the best barista in Australia, if you drink it as lukewarm, it tastes foul! That's because those things that are meant to be cold, should remain cold, those things that are meant to be hot, should be hot. It's lukewarm that is disgusting, distasteful, pollutant. It's lukewarm that you want to spit out of your mouth. The words of the spirit to the church are, I wish you were either hot or cold but not lukewarm! Anything but lukewarm!

The answer isn't trying harder, praying more, making some kind of an effort to be more spiritual. The answer is actually in the words to the spirit of the church: "*Behold I stand at the door and knock. If you let me come in, if you are earnest and repent, I will come in and eat with you.*" I will renew your spirit. I will enliven your heart. I will inspire your spiritual passion. I'll give you a new

life, a new energy, a new desire for God and for the Word. I believe with all my heart that God wants us to have an alive spiritual passion and it comes by pressing into Jesus, relying on His grace, allowing the Spirit to do work in our lives. By hiding the Word of God in our hearts, not only that we might not sin against God but that we might be pure, prophetic, passionate, prayerful and committed to our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Let's pray. Father we pray today that you'd give us the desire, the courage, the commitment to lead radical, passionate, uncompromising lives. That we would be transformed non-conformists who follow after Jesus Christ, who hide the Word of God in our hearts, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Communion

Have some food and drink prepared for this time

If you're able, join us at 11am Sunday through Zoom to share in communion together at rngwd.com/communion or via Facebook live rngwd.com/fbv.

If you are unable to join us, then please use the following reflection to take communion in your own way today and after, consider who you can call to have a chat as you would on a Sunday morning after a church service.

One of the things that we can be actively doing to embrace the idea of spiritual formation is to press into spiritual practices. Communion is a dedicated practice that we do week to week – to set aside time to pause and remember Jesus' death on a cross and the loving sacrifice that he made for each of us. As we pause for a few minutes and take simple food and drink – we remember Jesus meeting with his followers:

*Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it saying,
"Take, eat, this is my body".*

*Then he took the cup gave thanks and offered it to them,
and they all drank from it.*

Please share in your version of communion.

Communion is usually a time of being *in* community, breaking bread together as a symbolic remembering of Jesus' last supper with his disciples and followers. If we are not in our normal community it might feel strange to do this alone, as a couple or with only a small group of people.

Intentionally consider who you are communing with:

- Think of the people in close proximity to you e.g. neighbours. Give thanks for them.
- Consider and visually bring to mind friends in our church community who would normally be sitting close by at this time. Give thanks for them.
- Consider the community of the Trinity – God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit – a divine community into which you are embraced today as a beloved child of God.

Connect cards online

Click this link or enter it into your web browser rngwd.com/connect.

We love to know that you have been able to connect through worship today. Please click on the link (or enter it into your web browser) to our online connect cards letting us know which ways you have been able to worship, and if you want to let us know how we can praying with you.

Thank you!