

Sermon: Hold God's Word in Your Heart

Series: Dig Deep (Summer Teen Conference 2013)

Bible Text: Psalm 119:9-16

Psalm 119:9-16:

9 How can a young man keep his way pure?

By guarding it according to your word.

10 With my whole heart I seek you;

let me not wander from your commandments!

11 I have stored up your word in my heart,

that I might not sin against you.

12 Blessed are you, O LORD;

teach me your statutes!

13 With my lips I declare

all the rules of your mouth.

14 In the way of your testimonies I delight

as much as in all riches.

15 I will meditate on your precepts

and fix my eyes on your ways.

16 I will delight in your statutes;

I will not forget your word.

One of the cool things about Summer Teen Conference is that I like taking city kids from their concrete forests and putting them in beautiful, rustic cabins where nature is all around you, crawling all around you, biting all around you. I'm not a city kid. I'm also not a country kid. I'm from Los Angeles; I'm a suburban kid and that means I don't know anything about urban life. I never had to take the train or the T growing up. I don't know how to milk a cow. So basically, I don't know anything. I just know how to go to a house, like a lot of you.

It was really strange to grow up and have this perception because, when I came to Boston, I was thinking, "I work in urban downtown Boston Chinatown!" At the time, did you know that Chinatown had the reputation of being the poorest neighborhood in the entire city? It was also one of the most densely populated neighborhoods at the time. And it was the only place you could have adult entertainment: strippers, dance clubs, porn shops, and movies. That's the

Chinatown I knew when I got here. It's really weird when I go back to California and people ask me, "Where do you work?" and I respond, "Boston Chinatown". Yeah, it's awesome.

I guess I bring this up to you because you get this reputation perception and one of the perceptions I definitely didn't have was being someone who was physically aware or threatening. Some of you know that, during my sabbatical where I got six months of writing and resting and researching some other things last year, I took a class. Actually, I'm still taking that class. I take Krav Maga. It's basically the Israeli martial arts that they teach in the military. It's what the Israeli military forces learn. Now, I don't think much of it because I've been doing it for a couple years. Even saying that, I wonder what it makes you think of me. I remember taking Steve Liu and Pastor Tom Lee to a seminar with my Krav Maga instructor because we were going to the Philippines, despite being with secure people.

We went there with Pastor Tom and Steve and I felt bad because I honestly felt that my instructor didn't really prepare anything. He just talked for two hours. As we were walking away after the class, I was thinking, "Oh man, I just wasted our church's money. I wasted our time." Now, I won't quote Steve because he's here and he might have remembered it differently, but I can definitely quote Pastor Tom because all his children left and he can't correct me. Basically, I was asked, "Hey, was that okay?" and they responded, "That was so helpful! There were too many things to write down! I couldn't write fast enough!" and I thought, "really?" I guess I've been taking this class for two years, a couple hours a week, and maybe I just absorbed it all?

This most recent July, we were in Sweden. The last night of the trip, we were in Vernon's room. One of the guys there's name is Dennis and he asked me, "Oh, you take martial arts?" You have to imagine a Chinese Swedish guy with a cool, funky accent saying, "Krav Maga. Is that the Israeli one? Oh, show me show me! What can you do?" I told him, "If you take that pen and pretend it's a knife and that you're going to come and stab me..." I blocked and grabbed his wrist and bent it down. As I did that, he had to kneel to the ground so I wouldn't break his wrist. I, then, pulled the pen out of his hand. In my head, I was thinking, "I didn't really execute that move very well. I didn't make it proper." But then he exclaims, "That was awesome! Do that again!"

Have you seen the bruises on my arms? If you've seen them, it's not because my kids are mad at me. It's because I take this class and we have to do fun things like block. And so, when I looked at Dennis' face looking at me, I saw a sense of awe and maybe a little bit of fear, thinking "Aw, this guy is dangerous." I think that's true. I can kick you to break some of your ribs and probably break some of your fingers, but I never think about it that way because they teach you that the best thing is to do is to not fight. I actually would still be scared to fight against someone like Randall.

Here's the reason why I bring it up: I still don't think of myself that way [as someone potentially dangerous or threatening]. There's a kind of perception that maybe you have honestly never thought you could have about yourself. Maybe people would never look at you a certain way. Maybe you want to be smart, athletic, whatever. There's a perception of you that honestly you want, but you don't think you can get. Maybe you don't really care.

Whether you're Christian or not, whether you're listening or not, do you think people would ever look at you and think, "You're a really committed Christian. You're a very spiritually mature person." Is it possible? Have you ever thought that maybe you want that. Maybe you want to grow and become that person. You want to grow as a spiritually mature person. You just would love to grow and deep with God. Some of you, let's be honest, are thinking "well that's lame" because when you think of a Christian, you think of someone who carries around their Bible around school and talks about hell. That's what Christians think about, so maybe you don't want that perception. Or, maybe some of you, actually deep down, have this unique problem: you actually really care. You would love to be spiritually mature, but you don't think you will ever or can be.

I did not always think I'd be a pastor. If you knew people who knew me in high school, they didn't even think I was Christian. What I want to talk about tonight is the idea that you can actually become someone who actually knows a lot of the Bible, actually obeys a lot of the Bible, is actually a strong Christian, a Christian that other people look up to and not just because of what other people think. You want this not because you want to be glorious or powerful; it's actually a very positive thing to want.

I can tell you some of your counselors didn't think they would be here today. People probably thought, "That person could never become a counselor. We'd be lucky if they even showed up at church. We'd be happy if they even drive by a church within 50 miles in 10 years." Then there are people who were the super Christian kids in high school. They were up here [on the stage] singing and leading games, but four months later, in college, they haven't been to church. Can you be the kind of person that actually, years from now, is someone you can proudly show your kids? Someone that made younger people say, "This is a really spiritually committed person. I would love to be like him or her."

I have two points in my sermon tonight from Psalm 119: 9-16. Each of those two points has many, many sub-points. The first main point is this:

Young people naturally don't want to be spiritual.

Let's take a look at Psalm 119:9. This point will be a little shorter than the second point, which will probably take up about 70% of the talk.

Chapter 119 verse 9 says this:

"How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word."

He's asking a question and the question is this: how does someone who's young and has their whole life ahead of them act when it comes to obeying God and following His commandments? Probably, the way many of you feel now: You're getting bored. You're getting tired. If you are feeling that way, you're normal. I think deep down you know, you're a little different. All through the scripture, God has a big vision for what young people can do. Young people are used by God

greatly. God has great hope and confidence in young people. But, that being said, there is a natural tendency for young people to not care and to not follow God.

There are two kinds of people, in my view, that don't want to live along to God's way. This theme is a terrible theme. Dig Deep is a terrible theme. Because if I did a theme like "Go to God For Help" or "What You See is What You Get", Christians and non-Christians would find interest in it. Thank God for the hypes because this conference would be so boring otherwise. Let's be honest, some of you, if you knew the theme, maybe you or me just wouldn't care. For some of us, we really, flat out don't care. However, I think there is a group of people here, who tell themselves they don't care because they don't ever think they could ever pure.

Let's talk about purity. What does it mean? It doesn't just mean sexual purity. When the Bible talks about purity, it's asking "can you walk according to the way that God has instructed."

When I was in college, people said flat out said they didn't were not interested in Jesus Christ. As I understand more and grew, I realized more that they say they don't want to know about God, but the reason why they say this is because deep down, they tried the church thing and couldn't stop cussing. They tried the church thing, but they didn't want to stop partying. Honestly, they know that maybe it's bad to party, to cheat and lie through school, to backstab friends. They know these things. You know these things. We know these things. You know what one of my coolest friends couldn't admit? "I wish I could stop cussing, but I don't think I really can."

At UCLA my first year, one of my friends was on my floor. This guy was hilarious. He's from one of the richest cities in California. This guy would invite me to his dorm room that was so small. One day he told me "we're going to have a party and we're going to bring as many beer cans that can fit in the room". In a small dorm room with two beds and two desks, there was something like 180 cans of beer. The funny thing is that he lost his wallet.

At the end of the school year, he said to me, "Enoch, you must be a really, really committed Christian." I was pretty active at church. He knew I went to church and that, at that party, I brought Coca-Cola. (I told him to save them for me, but by the time I got there, they were all gone.) He said, "This is why I think you're a really strong Christian, Enoch: You don't cuss. You don't do drugs or drink alcohol. You don't have sex. Those three things make me think you must be the most committed Christian I've ever met." Even if you're not a Christian, you have an active sex life, or you do drugs, you know that these things don't automatically make you a Christian, but this is his perception.

You know what I realized? He could not imagine himself ever not doing those things. That's like saying, "you must be good at math because you can count." You laugh, but that's how some of us feel about those Christians on the stage singing, leading games, or praying for other people. You feel that you can never be those people. I think in a group this size, some people really think, "I don't think I could ever be that way."

You try. You want to, but you get discouraged. You don't think you could ever be that way, and so you say it's uncool and that you don't care, but you go home and read the Bible and you can't

understand it. Deep down, you actually want to care, but the counselors pigeon hole you as “the kid who doesn't care”.

The Bible says this. Every one of us, especially the young people, naturally does not want to sit there and focus on God's word. You know how weird it is? When someone asks, "What do you do on Friday nights?" and we respond, "We go in the basement, listen to a message from the Bible for 45 minutes, and we go around and share our feelings." You'll get a lot of mileage out of that. It's weird, but I want you to know, there is a way a young person can keep his or her way pure, and I mean so much more than sexual purity. Even if you're too cool to admit it or think it, I want you to know that God has no problem seeing you as someone who loves Him, loves the Bible, and loves theology. That's my first point. Young people naturally don't want to know the word or be pure.

The psalmist inquires, "How can young people keep their way pure?" He answers, with a simple line, in verse 9 and 10:

"by living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands..."

What I'd like to do is answer this question as my second point. How do we actually stay on this path of purity? How does that work? How can you actually have this reputation? Not so that you look good or spiritual, but because you genuinely want to. How can you become the kind of person who actually has Romans 8:31-39 almost memorized? Most of you might not have even known where that was in the Bible before this week! How does a young person stay on the path of purity? By seeking God with all of his or her heart and that basically means digging deep. It's to not stray from the commands.

I want to give you four points on how you can hide God's word in your heart, which is the inspiration of the title of this message.

The first point is this:

1. Ask for a teachable spirit.

Ask God to make you someone who is easily taught, who is ready to learn. Let's see this in verse 12:

“Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes!”

You can praise God by asking God, "Teach me". I don't know if you do this at Chinatown or Newton campus, but sometimes those really spiritual people are on time. You know what super spiritual people do before the service starts? They will pray. When was the last time you saw a teenager before youth group or TIOB just sitting there with a Bible on their lap praying. I have no idea what they're praying about, but I'll tell you what I pray. I'm not trying to look spiritual, but I'm basically praying this:

"God, if I'm going to read your Bible this morning or listen to it on a podcast or in a sermon, I know I'm not perfect, so somewhere along the line the Bible will contradict me. If I'm not perfect, somewhere in this reading, this teaching, or this sermon, the Bible will contradict me. It will go against my selfishness, my greed, and my insecurities. I already know I'm going to be corrected. God make me ready to receive. I want to grow."

Some of us know we're going to be corrected, so we put up our guards. My spirit wants to resist. When I know it's a passage with purity, I want to tell myself that I don't really struggle with lust. Or if it's a passage about kindness, I defend myself thinking I am a kind person. Before the Bible is read, before the Bible is opened, whether it's the radio or it's your iPod or someone reading it to you, you can say, "God, make me ready to hear your good word." You will be amazed at the difference that makes. Even if God doesn't do anything, but I believe he does, the very act of you saying, "God, make me ready" will make you ready. Try that, for like a week or a month. Before TIOB or youth group, pray, "God, do you want to tell me something tonight? Do you want to encourage me in some way? Do you want to challenge me? Do you to give me wisdom tonight?" Be teachable.

Point number two: Let's look at verse 13:

"With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth."

What he's saying is something very simple that actually, BCEC as a church doesn't do as much or as well. It is the very act of reading out loud the Bible. Point number one is pray that God would give you a teachable spirit. Point number two is:

2. Read the Bible out loud.

You know why I like to go out there for my morning devotions if I wasn't directing? I like to read the Bible out loud during my quiet time. Let me give you some benefits of reading the Bible out loud.

A. When you read it out loud, you're engaging multiple senses; you're talking and hearing.

This is also why I pray out loud. If I read out loud, I have to slow down. It's amazing how fast people say grace for their food in their mind. When I read the Bible, sometimes I want to go through it quickly, but if I had to read it out loud, it just sounds ridiculous if I read it too fast. There's no way I'm processing the words; I'm just checking off a box for "I read my Bible".

Try this: go to a part of your house, face a corner or something, and read the Bible out loud.

What really makes me sad when the preacher is so short on time, they say, "we don't have time to read the passage, so just read it on your own." No. Let me tell you, the best part of the sermon is when we read the Bible because that's always good. My sermon could be terrible. The best part of the sermon is reading the Bible.

I just want to encourage you to read the Bible out loud. Read it in different versions. Read it in good translations. I love the Children's Bible. You know why? I understand it. It's so much easier. I read multiple translations. I read the ESV, the NIV, the Greek Bible, and then I finish off with the Children's Bible. Some translations are much more helpful to me.

3. Look at God's word like it is money.

Look at the Bible like it is money. Now, two things you're probably thinking. "What?" and "What do you mean?" Let me answer "What?" first.

Psalm 119: 14:

"I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches."

Now you thought money was bad, but King David was rich. Job, in the Bible, was rich. Abraham was rich. Jacob was rich. Joseph was rich. These people were really, really rich. This guy, who wrote this psalm, says, "I want you to delight in God's word like it's a lot of money!" If you're not a Christian, or even if you are, you're thinking "I kind of understand that." You know what you want to do with a lot of money? I'll tell you what you want to do. You don't know.

I used to think I had no problem spending money, but then one day I got a \$100 gift certificate to Best Buy. I love Best Buy. As I walked into the store, I thought, "Even if I have to pay more, I'm going to use it for something." I spent hours walked through the aisles there that day. Even though I had this gift card, I realized I don't really want anything and I don't know what to do with it.

It's like ketchup. When you go to weddings in fancy hotels, in fancy restaurants, and you have children who get the kids meal, you know how the ketchup comes? They give everyone an unopened, sealed, miniature Heinz ketchup bottle. Do all my family and I use ketchup very often? No. But do you know what I tell my family? "They're paying for this wedding. They're entitled to their ketchup. Get the ketchup." We get the ketchup, but of course when they ketchup is there, they ask if they can have the ketchup, but I tell them they can only share one. Literally, my kitchen island drawer is filled with little ketchup bottles. Do I need them? No, but I want them anyway.

When you're teaching and you're hearing the Bible, and the pastor says "today I want to teach you about how you can't lose your salvation." You think, "Why do I want to know that? I don't really care. I'm not a Christian" or "Why do I want to know that? I don't ever think I'm going to doubt God." One day, you may need to know that.

You're sitting at church and someone says, "We're going to learn a sermon series on aging and what it means to get old to the glory of God. What it means to take care of parents who are older and have reverse roles." The older people in my congregation tell me that it was such a useful sermon because all their parents are old and all the teenagers groan, saying, "You're still doing a sermon on aging and getting old? Come on Enoch, it's getting old."

What about a sermon series on arguments of the existence of God or teaching from the Bible? Some might say, "Well I don't need to know this. I believe in God." You know how many college students email me and say, "Hey Enoch, remember that lesson you gave four years ago about what heaven is like? Can you email that to me? Because my roommate is totally interested" or "Hey Enoch, remember when you preached that message about why we need to believe in hell? Because the reason why my roommate left Christianity is because he doesn't like hell." I asked him, "So you remember my sermon, what do you remember?" and he responded, "I just remember it was helpful."

Because, like ketchup, one day, you might remember that someone somewhere showed you something in the Bible. You don't know what you're going to spend the money on. You don't know what you're going to use the ketchup on. But someday, you're going to say, "Oh man. I want that. I heard that somewhere." Someone talked about why does God say being gay isn't in God's plan? They love each other. Or why is it that you can't have sex until marriage? That doesn't seem to make sense. Or why does it say that women have to submit in the Bible?

The psalmist is saying this, "I delight in the riches. I want to accumulate knowledge of God's word. I don't even know what I'm going to use it for right now." But one day, your roommate in college, your best friend, your girlfriend or boyfriend, your aunt or uncle, your parents, or you might have a question and you'll think, "My counselor said this in a huddle at STC 2013. How do I even find her now? She said something really helpful. I don't remember what it was but she showed me something in the Bible." You track down Calvin to find that counselor and email them to ask them. Get Bible if you want money.

He says, "I delight in the Bible like great riches." It's fine to be rich. It's bad to be greedy. It's bad to be selfish. It's perfectly good to be rich; it's God's blessing. It's just bad to be oppressive. It's bad to be self-righteous.

Point number one: Ask God for a teachable spirit. Be malleable. Be moldable.

Point number two: Read God's word out loud. Say it out loud in small group. I know it sounds like Sesame Street. It sounds very children's Sunday school-ish, but I'd love it if you read the Bible out loud. I'd love for it to be read out loud to me because I get tired.

Point number three: Look at God's word like money. Long for it. Want it. You don't necessarily know what you want to spend it on, but trust me, one day you're going to look back at a lesson you learned from a counselor, from a Sunday school teacher, or from a TIOB lesson, and someday you're going to wish you had your notes.

And lastly, point number four:

4. Hiding God's word in your heart means internalizing it, which is a word I prefer over memorizing it.

Memorizing it is a perfectly good idea. I believe in scripture memorization, but I want you to think about internalizing it. You can memorize something, as in you can recite it, but you may

not internalize it. Actually, Jesus pointed in that the Pharisees could quote scripture all day long, but they clearly did not understand it. If you internalize the scripture and get it in your heart, I promise you, you're probably 95% the way towards memorizing it.

The point is this: you need to memorize scripture. I'm going to suggest five verses that you can equip yourselves with. I would love for you to pick one of these and consider memorizing one of these five verses:

1. **1 Corinthians 10:13:** "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." This is a great verse. It's about the fact that you're not so bad that other people don't struggle. But you're not so good that you can never struggle with that sin. I am just as likely to be racist as a Nazi. I'm just as likely to kill people as a terrorist. I'm just as likely to oppress people as a dictator. I just don't have the money, power, or time. That's the only different between me and Pol Pot. The point is, do you believe you're just as bad as everyone you think is terrible? If you don't, you need to know this verse. Or do you think you're worse than everyone in this room. Someone here probably thinks "I'm the worst person in this room." Or the Christian version is "I'm the worst, fake, hypocritical Christian in this room." You need this verse.

2. **2 Timothy 1:7:** "for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control"

3. **Galatians 2:20:** "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." This is one of my life verses. I don't live for me. I don't live for my family. I don't live for BCEC. I live for Christ because He lives in me. I die to myself. It's a great verse.

4. **Psalms 119: 9 and 11:** "How can a young person stay on the path of purity?" and "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." I am encouraged by this verse. This is how you do it.

5. **Psalms 19:14:** "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer." What a great thing to say, to think.

You've got so much more of the Bible memorized than you think. I would encourage you to memorize one of these verses, or even all five of them. Then memorize more.

There are two points to this psalm that I want you to understand. As we dig deep in God's word, we want to talk about hiding God's word in our hearts. We have to know this: everything about your age, your life, your life stage, and your culture is about not following God. Some of you have been in college long enough to know that nothing in college is about following God. It's very normal. You're normal. It's normal to want to experiment with drugs and sex. Because it's normal to not want to be pure, you have to be willing to dig deep.

Dig deep by:

1. Asking God for a teachable spirit

2. Reading God's word out loud

3. Getting God's word like it's money

Get all of it when you can. It doesn't matter that you don't know what to do with it.

4. Internalizing God's word

Find a verse you want to memorize, a verse that helps you where you are today. God's word is big. Find a verse that relates to what you're struggling with now.

As we think about this, I want to close with how this relates to Jesus. We haven't talked much about Jesus this week. What does this have to do with Jesus? Basically, Jesus came to Earth to do two things. The first one we kind of already know: he came to die on the cross to pay for our sins. His death made it so that we can go to heaven. His death made it so that we can get right with God. That's obviously the most important thing.

Do you know the other thing Jesus said specifically what he came to do? It was not to heal. It was not to perform miracles. He says in the Gospels that he wants to leave the city because people keep going to him for healing and miracles. He tells us, "I came to preach." Jesus came to preach the Good News and to be the good news. If you really want to dig deep in God's word, you need to know that Jesus came to give you this word. The more you appreciate the fact that Jesus came to Earth to live and die for you and me to have this Bible, the more you're going to want to hide it. It's his parting words. It's his last words. It's his undying words for you and me.