

**General Topics :: Meet the (blind) woman who memorized the New Testament****Meet the (blind) woman who memorized the New Testament - posted by repentcanada, on: 2009/1/14 6:07**

Meet the (blind) woman who memorized the New Testament

By Polly House

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MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Picture in your mind a woman who has memorized the New Testament-- yes, all of it, all 260 chapters -- every word.

She'd be the quiet type, introspective, very pious. She'd probably be quite frail, not someone with a full social life. And yes, she'd live alone -- with several cats.

Nadine Hammonds would surprise you.

She's full of life. She's fun, vibrant, quick-witted, talented and, according to her best friend of over 40 years, "the most brilliant person I know."

She was even a winner on the "Ted Mack Amateur Hour"!

Nadine, who lives in Memphis, Tenn., and is a member of Bellevue Baptist Church, is a retired woman, married for 15 years to Bob Hammonds, whom she calls "the love of my life, my sweetheart."

Scripture memorization has always been a passion for Nadine. "Even as a child I loved the Bible," she says. "Memorizing has always been easy for me, just as it was easy for my mother."

Wanda McDaniel, Nadine's best friend since they met at Southwestern (now Rhodes) College in Memphis in 1951, would drive from her southeast Missouri home to Nadine's home in northeast Arkansas, and they'd drive over to Memphis together. "Nadine, minister to me from the Word," Wanda would often say, and so Nadine would begin quoting a chapter from the Bible. "It would minister to me so much," Wanda recalls of those times together.

Nadine would ask Wanda to "try her" on quoting Scripture. "I guess I'd call out about a dozen chapters, and she could tell me every one of them. Nadine might occasionally miss an 'an' or 'the' but not often. Her concentration is absolutely uncanny," says Wanda.

A few years ago when Nadine decided to see if she could memorize an entire book of the Bible, she chose the Gospel of Matthew. "It's such a good place to start," she explains.

"I've always believed that statement 'to whom much is given, much is required,'" Nadine says. For her, memorizing Scripture has been a way to give back and do something for God.

Nadine said she doesn't like to just be able to quote the words back. "I like to know I can tell it back with expression, conversationally. That's when it can touch someone."

Nadine is sightless and has been since birth, but as she says, "Everybody has something to deal with, and being sightless doesn't have anything to do with memorizing. I learn with my brain, not my eyes!"

Her philosophy has always been, "Don't major on the minors!" She says, "I don't dwell on that. Let someone else tell that story."

Listening to tapes doesn't work for Nadine. She says with tapes, you have to listen then rewind, listen then rewind. "You'd wear out a set of tapes in no time doing that," she says. Also, she says you have to be able to think ahead as you are memorizing -- something tapes won't allow you to do as well as the written word.

"I've worn out a whole set of Braille New Testaments in the past few years," says Nadine. "I'm on my second set."

"There really isn't a trick to memorizing Scripture. It's just work. I love a challenge. You do have to have a certain mind-set, and you have to concentrate."

But doesn't it require hours and hours of time each day? Nadine says she just fits it in as she's washing dishes, watching television with Bob, listening to music or riding in the car. "I'm a real extrovert. I'm going and doing all the time. I don't just sit at home. I'm very active."

Now that Nadine has fulfilled her goal of memorizing the New Testament, is she finished?

"Have I arrived? Absolutely not. No, no, I realize how much more I have to do," she quickly says.

Nadine says it took her about three years to get the memorization done. She had memorized Scripture all her life, so she did have a history of Scripture knowledge, but her goal of memorizing the whole New Testament only took shape the last few years.

"The 'begats' are some of the hardest to learn -- all those names no one has ever heard of! But if God put them in the Bible, they must be important," she laughs.

Using her talents as a singer, pianist and speaker, Nadine has done many programs for church groups. On Palm Sunday of 1995, Nadine did a program at First Baptist Church in Memphis titled "The Last Week of Christ, According to Matthew: A Concert of Sacred Song and Scripture." For over an hour, she wove a dozen songs and Scripture passages together, telling the story of Christ's last week on earth. The congregation was "so touched, so moved," says Wanda. "It was one of the most beautiful programs I've ever heard."

Nadine has become something of a celebrity. She has been interviewed by newspapers from across the country and has appeared on television, both in the Memphis area and on CNN. Paul Harvey even spoke about her on his radio program, and this past November she was honored in New York City by the National Bible Association.

Having the opportunity to witness to people is important to Nadine. "Being interviewed is a lot different from doing a program at church. Being interviewed is hard. But I look at it as an opportunity from the Lord."

Adrian Rogers, Bellevue Baptist Church pastor, said, "Nadine Hammonds is at the same time a marvel and a blessed encouragement. Her accomplishments in Scripture memorization have been incredible. There is no way possible that she could take all this Scripture into her heart and mind without being radically, dramatically and eternally changed."

"In the spiritual life, the battlefield is the mind. A mind filled and saturated with the Word of God is a mighty weapon in the hand of the God of that Word," says Rogers.

Not content to just rest on her laurels, Nadine is working on some of the Old Testament. "I've got the Book of Ruth now and about 16 or 17 other Old Testament chapters, but I won't get all of it. It's too hard keeping it all."

Comparing memorizing Scripture to baking bread, she says, "It can't be rushed. Your memory has to set, like bread. You don't just mix it up and put it in the oven. It has to have time to rise."

"Memorizing Scripture, hiding it away in my heart, has been the highlight of my life -- the most thrilling thing," Nadine says. "It truly is a way to make yourself a living sacrifice."

"I'm a very practical person. I want to hear Jesus say, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord'" (Matt. 25:21, KJV).

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