

Our Amazing Brain

Have you ever struggled to pull up information that you've already learned, even with our amazing brain? Anyone have a deep desire to know and understand the Bible, yet it feels like it's beyond you?

I have Good News for you to accelerate learning! God designed us with an amazing brain and we need to intentionally align learning with it. Experts tell us that *storage* is not the main problem. All our mind has previously stored is still there. *Retrieval* is the problem we experience. And the following two tips are simple enough that anyone can learn them. The sooner we learn them, the more quickly we are on the journey toward satisfying learning. And our relational God, Father, Son and Spirit, designed us for this. Jesus called those who followed Him *disciples*. Disciple means *learner*, Jesus plan for us.

TIP ONE: "Embed Categories in your Memory"

Our Team-of-Three is very well organized. Just gaze at the breathtaking universe. Or at the marvelous way the human body functions. He created us in His image. So it comes as no surprise to me that studies reflect that a mental filing system with clear categories improves our retrieval.

Have you ever been in an office where some temp filed important documents randomly? What a horror to retrieve! Our minds work similarly in optimum mode. As you read the Bible, what are the categories you presently use to store information from its sixty-six books? How is this working for you?

We learn new things by relating these to previously learned information. Our categories act as the skeleton on which we attach a myriad of detailed truth. The better your mental filing system, the easier to retrieve. Scholars have proposed many excellent storage categories over the years. In the past, I have learned categories so complex that I need another storage container to remember them!

The following categories seem comprehensive yet not exhaustive, simple yet not simplistic. I suggest you begin here. Print this out until you memorize it and make it your own. As you study Scripture, file the "*neons*" that light up brightly for you from Scripture under these categories in your mind as "*must remember*" truth. In time, if you

need more, personalize it. Modify my five categories, two big-view questions, Level One, and three catalytic pictures that fuse the two Level One questions together.

1. Level One Category: "What is God like?" In short, God is a relational Trinity. Although this fries my mental circuits, it also ravishes my heart. He is intrinsically **good, great and generous** (see Genesis 1) He is a Being far beyond our ability to fully comprehend. And what He reveals to me draws my heart in love to Him (Ephesians 1:17). Much of my website explains and points out how LifeChanging each of these are. Of course, God is much, much more. We are searching now for large categories. You have a lifetime to expand on this.

2. Level One Category: "How does this God see me?" Our Family-of-Three created us in His image, after His likeness, as much like God as any created being could ever be (look at Psalm 8:5 in the NASB Bible). God did not create because He was lonely or lacked anything. He has been a fully satisfied SmallGroup of three since before creation. But love longs for more outlets to pour life into, so God created humanity.

Even with the horrific breach humanity created by going rogue, the relational Trinity had a plan, a costly one that meant investing the very life of the Son of God. The *incarnation* of the Son of God (God becoming man without ceasing to be God, oh mystery!) belongs here. Not only did Jesus come to open up a way back to God through His death, resurrection and ascension, but He also embodied humanity. He demonstrated to us how to live as restored humanity and also what His Father is like.

Through faith in Christ, this God restores us, bringing us home, to the home we had been longing for all our lives. Now he builds and trains us up to send us out on His God-assignments. He is "*with us,*" partnering in all we do. My website, as well as many great Christian books amplifies this.

First Level Two Category: "God is FATHER and I am His Beloved Child" –Family of God - Community

Have you stopped to think of the degree of difficulty for created humanity (still in-process even after giving our wholehearted allegiance to Him) to relate with an infinite, uncreated Being? Our

gracious God has given us powerful pictures to begin to bridge the gap, three of which I see as primary.

The **Family of God** interweaves itself from Genesis 1-2 before the Fall through Revelation 22. This is God's presence as it relates to His beloved children, those who have come to Him through faith in Christ, His people. This picture depicts us as much-loved children who turn to our Father for everything in our lives. He grows us up and trains us for His Family Business. For provision. For relationship. For companionship. For protection. For love and compassion. For character and ministry training. He fulfills all the needs that He designed us with in Genesis 1 and 2. Every family on earth is an imperfect expression of this eternal **Family of God**.

Second Level Two Category: “God is KING and I am His Servant-Warrior” Kingdom of God - Mission

The **Kingdom of God** also stands prominently in Scripture, referred to as eternal in the OT. I view the **Kingdom of God** as His presence reflected through His people towards the world to make right what is not right. Jesus embodies God’s Kingdom right to rule. When we came to Christ, the inbreaking of God's **Kingdom** presence transferred us out of the dominion of darkness and escorted us into the **Kingdom of God** (Colossians 1:13-14). As servant-warriors, we carry the same authority that Jesus did (Matthew 28:19-20). The Father sends us into the world of people in the same way He sent His unique Son, Jesus, to do the same things His Son did (John 20:21). Read the Gospels to see the full extent of our call (except for Jesus' unique atonement for our sins, which only One who is both God and man could do).

Third Level Two Category: “God is GROOM and I am His Precious Bride” – Marriage - Worship

The picture of **Marriage** also spans the entire Bible, yet not nearly as clearly as the other two. Except for a few OT illustrations, the culmination of the intimacy of our relationship with the relational Trinity could not be grasped until Jesus came. Jesus revealed the radiance of God's glory (Hebrews 1:3). The **Marriage Feast of the Lamb** culminates this great picture of full partnership in Revelation.

However, if we compare the first marriage in Genesis 2:20b-25 with Paul's Spirit-generated insight in Ephesians 5:25-33, we begin to grasp a measure of the intimacy and co-regency that God has always

intended for humanity (Genesis 1:26-28). This picture brings us to our knees! The awesome privilege to be invited into such intimacy as God's intimate partners.

Summary: These are the three great **pathways** through which we freely and generously give His love away. Mission. Community. Worship. And also these same three are essential nutrients in a **soil** most conducive to health growth. *Both/And.*

TIP TWO: “File Crucial Ideas as ‘MUST REMEMBER’”

Experts say an average adult has somewhere around 50,000 thoughts a day! God designed our minds with filters. We automatically filter out what is crucial from what is inconsequential. Over time, we train our minds to focus on what is crucial for us. Have you ever heard some criticized for having “selective hearing?” How do we train our mind to know what the crucial Scriptural “**must remember**” ideas are to accelerate learning by enhancing retrieval?

1. Put the Word into practice to tap into your amazing brain.

Why does the Bible puts so much emphasis on **doing** the Word of God, rather than simply studying or hearing? When truth intersects life, reflecting on this encounter brings about true learning. We don't learn simply by studying. We learn as we put it into practice and reflect on how that truth looks in life. Stated another way: the sequence for learning is: study, do, *then* reflect to know. Active learning files crucial truth as “**MUST REMEMBER**” stuff.

2. Review the lesson to align with how your amazing brain works.

Review shouts “*This is ‘must remember’ stuff!*” One of the responses in “*DiscipleMaking Companion*” when we get together is to *review* the key points we remember as a group from last week.

3. Learn the Word in community & tell stories how truth encountered your life.

When we learn together in community, and come back the next week to share a fresh story how truth intersected life, hearing these encounters helps us to see truth differently. Our minds have now received this several times and files the truth as “**must remember**” for easier retrieval.

SYNTHESIS: The source of all is the Father, Son and Spirit, reflected in my two essential questions. “*What is God like?*” “*How does this God see me?*” Since God transcends our ability to fully comprehend, He gave us three primary pictures of His presence so we will better enjoy and experience, respond to and passed Him along to others.

The first picture of the **Family of God** is our inward response to partner with His presence to raise up a family with the inward character and passion, and with the outward skills to be about the **Family** business. This is *koinonia* in community. The **Kingdom of God** is our outward response to partner with His presence to bring many sons into the **Family** through compassionate mission. The picture of **Marriage** is our upward response, commonly called worship. Worship is our wholehearted allegiance to our relational God, giving back to Him the love He so freely gave us. These are the three great **pathways** through which we freely and generously give His love away. And also these same three are essential nutrients in a **soil** most conducive to health growth. *Both/And.*

From My Ministry Call

TIP ONE: “Embed Categories in your Memory”

Keep your categories as few as possible, yet as many as needed (*KISS, keep it simple, servant*). I add these three because the emphasis on what I feel God calling me do is DiscipleMaking through SmallGroups. 1 Thess 1:6-10 not only gives us the Level Two category of “*community*,” the Family of God, but also clearly sketches out **how** to build up new believers and train them up with the character, values and skills to follow the “Family business”? How do we raise up our spiritual children towards maturity?

In my mental file cabinet, I also added three more categories. If your particular emphasis is *worship* or *mission*, **if needed**, add several to your emphasis. Within 1 Thessalonians 1:6-10 on “community,” I see three “nutrients” for a soil conducive to releasing life in SmallGroup interaction.

Much of our transformation happens in the alternating rhythm of our private time with God and our time with others in SmallGroup life. So as we intersect the lives of others, deliberately align ourselves

with the Spirit. He forges together *relational belonging* with *biblical responsiveness* and *intentional mutual-ministry* to develop radical disciples or learners.

1. *Relational belonging* (“*You became imitators*” plus 1:5b): Young Christians need authentic, though imperfect, models of what this Christian life looks like in real life (incarnational living). God was burning into Paul’s heart the need to walk with these young believers life-on-life. They had the potential to become generational leaders—to set apart their past from their future and make a difference. Paul and his team invested all they possessed to help them get to that place.

2. *Biblical responsiveness* (“...in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit”). **Experiencing** promised freedom comes through the pathway of **knowing** and **doing** His Word. Make disciples who hear and obey the Word of God, and quickly make other disciples who multiply disciples. What these new believers learned, they went out and immediately gave away to others (1:7-9). This obedience-focused learning accelerates their own personal growth. Spiritual experience arising out of response to the Word illumined by the Spirit connects faith to our whole lives. “*Word & Spirit.*” *Both/And.*

3. *Intentional mutual-ministry* (“*the Lord’s message rang out*”): From day one, these young believers possessed an eager, joyous, almost happy-go-lucky expectancy as they put their faith into daily practice. They put it into practice in their own lives, becoming contagious carriers of Jesus. Then as they went about doing life in the surrounding regions of Macedonia and Achaia with Jesus in the forefront, joining what the Father was already doing in their region.

How will you embed these five categories into your memory to accelerate retrieval (or seven if you add mine)

