

Why an Annual Theme Verse?

GOALS AND PURPOSES OF THE ANNUAL THEME AND BONUS VERSE

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WHY ONE MORE VERSE? Our students already memorize a lot of Bible verses every year. Why should we add one more to the list? What difference could a single passage of scripture or a single biblical principle make in the life of a student? What impact could a series of strategically chosen passages and principles make over a number of years?

LIFE PRINCIPLES – The Bonus Verse is part of a school-wide incentive to help students take hold of important life principles that lead to maturity. In concert with the Character-In-Action program, which is designed to help students put their faith to work, the Bonus Verse speaks to spiritual formation issues and heart attitudes that should accompany our acts of service. Bonus Verses are brief biblical passages that teach a series of life principles; the kind of transforming principles that Paul spoke of for the “renewing of the mind” (Romans 12:2). They are called “Bonus Verses” because they offer an extra Bible memory challenge beyond the regular quarterly Bible memory assignments, and include a variety of annual prizes and incentives. While the quarterly assignments promote memorization for breadth across a wide range of biblical literature, the annual Bonus Verse, by comparison, promotes memorization for depth. It allows opportunity for sustained focus on a single biblical theme for an entire year with a powerful “transformational” principle that can influence the very course of a student’s life.

A DOORWAY PASSAGE – Each passage is a doorway to an entire body of biblical literature that speaks to these themes. They include subjects such as: the centrality of the heart, the importance of doing, the power of revelation, the secret to success, the means to maturity, and the treasure that lasts. Every year, the Bonus Verse focuses on a short passage with a graphic theme (a well, a mirror, a root, a treasure) that is tied to a spiritual formation principle. As we enter the sixth year of the Bonus Verse these are the principles we have considered so far.

PRINCIPLE # 1 – WHATEVER IS IN YOUR HEART WILL FIND ITS WAY OUT.

Bonus Verse & Theme: Proverbs 4:23 – *The Wellspring of Life*

Application: Our heart is the source from which all of life is lived. Always Guard Your Heart.

PRINCIPLE # 2 – THE ONLY TRUTH THAT CHANGES YOU IS THE TRUTH YOU USE.

Bonus Verse & Theme: James 1:23-24 – *The Mirror of Truth*

Application: Gods’ Word, like a mirror, tells us the truth about ourselves. Be a Doer of the Word.

PRINCIPLE # 3 – GOD’S WORD IS YOUR MOST IMPORTANT RESOURCE FOR SUCCESS.

Bonus Verse & Theme: Psalm 1:2-3 – *The Root of Prosperity*

Application: God’s Word, like a stream, enriches the deeply rooted. Meditate on God’s Word.

PRINCIPLE # 4 – YOUR TREASURE IS THE MASTER OF YOUR HEART.

Bonus Verse & Theme: Matthew 6:24 – *The Treasure of Heaven*

Application: There are two treasures in life, but you can only serve one. Treasure what is Eternal.

PRINCIPLE # 5 – THE STRAIGHT PATH IS THE PATH THAT SETS YOU FREE.

Bonus Verse & Theme: Proverbs 3:5-6 – *The Path of Freedom*

Application: Our next step is the most important step along God’s path. Trust God in Everything.

PRINCIPLE # 6 – TRUTH IS YOUR MOST POWERFUL WEAPON.

Bonus Verse & Theme: 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 – *The Weapons of Power*

Application: The only way to destroy lies is with the weapons of truth. Take Captive Every Thought.

OUR GOAL is to live with one of these passages for a full year, exploring its message and other correlating scripture. Chapel messages introduce the theme and teachers reinforce the principle in classroom discussions. Students who memorize the passage have an opportunity to recite it to the school administrator and have a brief discussion about its meaning. Various incentives are provided to encourage students to continue to recite and think about the Bonus Verse throughout the year: wristbands for each verse, gold coins for weekly recitations (premium Belgian chocolate), and dress-down days for class-wide participation. While our focus is on one theme per year, we have discovered that new students to ICS often want to go back and learn previous verses, and teachers often refer back to previous verses in future years. As a result, we have found that all Bonus Verses remain active once they have been introduced.

3RD THROUGH 8TH GRADE – Bonus Verse materials are designed primarily for elementary and middle school grades. It is our goal to have every student in 3rd through 8th grade, complete the Bonus Verse challenge annually. But we find that many students at the primary level (K to 2nd) enthusiastically choose to participate. While the metaphorical elements of each Bonus Verse might be challenging for our younger students, there are simple concepts that they can grasp; and they are often highly motivated to participate.

BIBLICAL MEDITATION – The goal here is not just the memorization of a verse or the earning of prizes. The goal is the skill of sustained biblical “meditation” on principles that God has ordained for life in His world. This is not just about collecting more Bible knowledge, but about meditating upon it. The spiritual discipline of biblical “meditation” (Joshua 1:8 and Psalm 1:1-3) is not just an intellectual exercise or an academic assignment. And it’s not just for super saints. It is a basic strategy for everyone who wages war on the battleground of the heart (James 4:1-3). The sooner our students learn this strategy for life, the sooner they will be prepared for the inevitable battles that lie ahead.

IMAGES AND IDEAS – But there is something else at work here. It is the distillation of spiritual principles and concepts into simple images and ideas that our children can grasp. Every Bonus Verse and theme contains a visual object to help them hold onto the message: a well, a mirror, a root, a treasure, etc. These verses also make use of extreme language that gives emphasis to the principles they contain. For example: “Above all else guard your heart...,” “Anyone who listens to the word...,” “...Whatever he does prospers,” and “No one can serve two masters.” When we find this kind of extreme or superlative language in the Bible, it suggests that these principles are universal in nature and inescapable. They apply to everyone, children and adults.

BONUS VERSE MATERIALS can be found online at www.icsva.org/student-life/bonus-verse. It will lead to a set of PDF files with study materials for all current and previous Bonus Verses. Parents are encouraged to make use of the study materials for family discussion. One of the best strategies is to simply ask your children if they can recite the Bonus Verse. Then allow them to tell you what they have learned about it. Allowing students to be the “teacher” gives them ownership in the discussion and encourages them to articulate the principles in their own words. Parents are encouraged to adapt and guide the discussion to the different needs and maturity of each child.

OUR MISSION – One of the things the Bonus Verse should do for us as a school is to sharpen our focus on the mission of Christian education. While we must be committed to academic excellence and utilize the most effective methods and resources for training the mind, our mission must also target the needs of the heart. An incredible opportunity is available to every ICS student through parents, teachers and administrators who are committed not only to academic excellence, but also to spiritual formation and the continual transformation of the heart.

For additional study materials on the Bonus Verse and a copy of the “Ten Step Bible Memory Method for Life,” go to www.icsva.org/student-life/bonus-verse on the Immanuel Christian School website.