

August 22nd

Memory verse

Jesus saith unto him,

I am the way, the truth, and the life:

no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

John 14:6

Have you ever tried using flashcards to help you learn your memory verses? There are some hints on making flashcards in today's lesson for you to try out. More about today's memory verse in tomorrow's lesson.

A missionary story to read¹

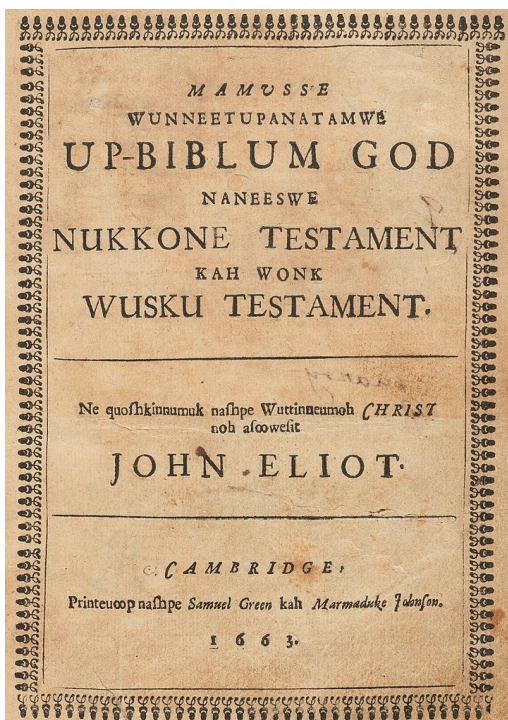
This is what your memory verse looks like in the translation by Experience Mayhew (1673–1758) based on that of John Eliot (1604-1690) into the Algonquin language of the indigenous people of North America:

Jesus wuttunuh,

Nan may, kah wunnomwaonk, kah pomontamoonk:

matta howan peyaonoo Wutrooshinneuh, qut nashpe nen.

This may look unintelligible to you but look again. Can you work out the word for “Father”? What about “way”, “truth”, “life” and “and”? If you look at the title page of John Eliot's Algonquin Bible shown below, you will be able to find the Algonquin word for “and” again.



In today's optional resources files I have included the life of John Eliot for slightly younger readers. I will include here for older ones some interesting details which it does not include so for the full picture, begin today by reading the optional resources file.

The Puritans and the Scottish Covenantors understood the urgent need for missionary work. In the days of King Charles I they petitioned parliament asking ‘for the propagating of the gospel in America and the West Indies’.

The settlers in New England had the same spirit. One of the most important purposes for establishing the Colony in Massachusetts Bay was “to win and invite the natives of the country to the knowledge and obedience of the only true God and Saviour of mankind” according to the 1628 Charter of the Massachusetts Bay Company.

John Eliot grew up in a godly Puritan family in England. He had a good education and became proficient in Hebrew and Greek. After his studies at Cambridge he became a teacher in a school run by the Puritan Thomas Hooker (1586-1647). Here he was converted. “Here the Lord said to my dead soul, live! live! and through the grace of God I do live and shall live forever!” he wrote.

¹ Information from <https://www.evangelical-times.org/articles/historical/john-eliot-puritan-missionary-to-the-indians/> and other sources.

When the situation became difficult in England because of the persecutions of Archbishop Laud, John Eliot and other members of his family sailed for New England. Here he became a noted preacher and founded a school. When the Massachusetts Bay government decreed that, “efforts to promote the diffusion of Christianity among aboriginal inhabitants be made with all diligence,” he was appointed to do missionary work among the indigenous people.

John Eliot had already been studying the Algonquin language. It was quite unlike anything he had ever encountered before. Now he somehow had to learn how to preach in this language. He began with a sermon that explained the ten commandments and covered creation and the fall, heaven and hell and how we can be saved through Christ. At the close of the service he asked if anyone had any questions. The listening Indians had quite a few questions and many of them asked how they could come to know Jesus for themselves and be saved.

In time there were many conversions and by the end of the 1640s the indigenous Christians themselves were doing most of the missionary work among their own people. On **August 22**, 1670 an indigenous church was founded at Martha's Vineyard. The Christian Indians tended to live together and formed what became known as “praying towns”. John Eliot recognised that not all of the converts were sincere but there were as many as 4,000 indigenous people living in these towns by 1674.

The work of translation and publication was carried on in earnest with the the whole Bible (see picture above) as well as Psalm books for singing, and a catechism all translated by John Eliot. But then the people of the “praying towns” came under a severe trial.

A war took place in 1675-6 known as King Philip's War. The ins and outs of the war are too complex to go into here but the war was in the main an attempt by indigenous groups to drive out English settlers. The “praying towns” did not join in the attempt and so were themselves subject to attack. There had originally been fourteen “praying towns”. Only four remained and the total number of inhabitants was just 162 altogether.

John Eliot preached and witnessed to the indigenous people until he was too infirm to walk. He died praying that there would be revival in the shattered indigenous church. We will read about the answer to his prayer in the lesson for 5th October.

Something write and something to make²

Have you ever used flashcards to help you learn something? They can be a very useful aid, especially where something has to be memorised (like a poem) or recognised (like letters of the alphabet or vocabulary in a new language).

The lady who invented flashcards, Favell Lee Mortimer (1802-18798), died after a long and useful life on **22nd August** at West Runton in Norfolk.



Mrs Mortimer invented flash cards to go with her reading book, *Reading Without Tears*. No one before had thought of teaching reading by means of large cards featuring the letters and letter combination including example words and illustrative pictures.

² Information from *Not Without Tears* (Kilmarnock, 2018) available from <https://www.ritchiechristianmedia.co.uk/product/not-without-tears>

But there was a reason why Mrs Mortimer was concerned that children should learn to read. Until we can read we cannot access God's Word for ourselves. This is something that has motivated missionaries since the days of John Eliot to devise a written form for the languages they encounter and to translate God's Word and teach the people to read it.

There was another problem in Mrs Mortimer's day too. Until children could read the New Testament for themselves, they were often left without much knowledge of what is in the Bible since there were no children's books to explain to them what the Bible says. Mrs Mortimer also wrote what was probably the very first book of Bible histories (she would never use the word "stories" as it was confusing for children who were used to hearing fictional stories) and simple teaching for children. Called *The Peep of Day* it sold in immense quantities both in Britain and in the USA. In the picture on the page above you can see the little schoolroom built by Mrs Mortimer's grandfather at Fosbury in Wiltshire where he had a big country house. Here Mrs Mortimer learned to teach reading as a young woman and here she told the children the Bible histories that became *The Peep of Day*.

Making something simple so that a child can read it without difficulty and yet without losing any important information is difficult. Mrs Mortimer was a master of this skill. Try your hand at it. In today's optional resources files I have included the story of the donkey that did not drown from Mrs Mortimer's biography. Can you adapt it for young readers? You will need to write short sentences and use a simple vocabulary, limiting the number of longer words as far as possible. Also in today's optional resources file is the same story as Mrs Mortimer told it herself in her reading book *Reading Without Tears*. In those days it was thought help-ful to hy-phe-nate all words of more than one syl-lab-le in child-ren's read-ing books. I have left the hyphens in the story so you can see what this looks like. What do you think? Does it help?

Mrs Mortimer loved children and although she had none of her own she took in orphans, and looked after them. When, as an old lady, she moved to the seaside town of West Runton she spent plenty of time with the children herself, taking them out "a great deal to enjoy themselves among the furze." She got a pet lamb for the little ones to rear by hand and she had some steps or stairs cut into the cliff so that the beach could be easily reached. "I visit the beach after breakfast with a train of children," she wrote in the May of her first year in West Runton, "the baby [is] carried by four in a plaid down the stairs... He is so happy among the stones and sands that it is hard to get him up again..."

Many topics that you have to learn can be made easier by means of flashcards. From mathematical or chemical formulae to memory verses there is generally a use for flashcards somewhere. Every subject has its own specialist vocabulary and flashcards can be useful in learning this. Make a set today for yourself or perhaps for a younger member of the family who is learning to read. The best size is that of an ordinary postcard and you can either cut out the cards yourself or buy some blank postcards from a stationers. Make sure the writing on the card is as large as possible for young children. If you are learning a topic such as language vocabulary or chemical formulae, put the translation or meaning on the reverse of the card. If you make a new flashcard each week for your memory verse you will soon have a very helpful collection.