
How to Memorize Scripture

Into Thy Word Ministries www.intothyword.org

Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:18-21; Psalm 63: 1-8; 119: 9, 11, 72; Matthew 4:4; Philippians 3:10; Col. 3:16; 2 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 4:12; James 1:21-25; 1 Peter 2:2; 3:15

I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.
Psalm 119:11

Nothing in our Christian life is as important or compares to the value of learning God's Word and then incorporating His precepts into our lives. Thus, memorizing a passage of Scripture is an essential way not only to know His Word, but to know and grow in our Lord and Savior. Yet, many Christians have neglected, even negated this discipline, including me on occasions. We desire the quick way; *give me the easiest shortest plan to be a Christian. I am only interested in what is convenient, easy and hassle free.* We want something to do that takes little to no work and then we may decide to do it, if we feel like it. Yet, memorizing the Scriptures takes our time, effort, and work; thus, we usually just will not do it. But, consider this: does not God, who saved us and provides for us deserve our best? Doesn't He deserve our best attention and mindset, things we give to others that are so much less important and even fleeing? It is my endeavor here to help persuade you of the importance and veracity of memorizing Scripture, and some tips I have learned over the years to help you do it.

Why We Tend Not to Memorize Scripture

I will obey your decrees; do not utterly forsake me. Psalm 119:8

We can come up with all kinds of reasons why we should not or need not memorize Scripture. Perhaps, you are saying or thinking, "I can't because I have a bad memory," or "I just do not have time;" "I have tried this before and I could not do it," or "why should I?", or "I am not a pastor or in leadership." Someone told me once, "I do not need to because Jesus told me I do not have to." I can tell you that I do have a bad memory, and I certainly do not have the time while I pastor, travel, run an international ministry, and then there is my precious new baby. And, I can also certainly tell you that Jesus would never, ever tell you something that contradicts His Word. We are called by God Himself, even *commanded* to learn, know, ponder on, and memorize Scripture (Josh 1:8; Psalm 1; 15; Is. 8:12; 1 Peter 3: 13-22; 4:12)!

Yet, we tend to not do what He has called—even commanded us to do! We are struggle with this working out of our salvation as described in Philippians

2. We need to work on what hinders us from Christ. I am naturally a lazy person and I would much rather read a “readers digest” version of something—to just get the *crux* of the matter and move on to something more fun, or just sit and do nothing but watch a movie or read a magazine. Yet, God has called me to pastor and research, which takes much more effort, time, and work than I naturally desire to do. Thus, I have had to learn to discipline myself, practice it, and learn to stick with it, even when I would rather be doing something less intensive or more fun. Because I want to grow in Christ and share with others what I am learning, I have had to learn it first. And, that is what a pastor should be doing, even when we would rather play golf or go fishing (which we can do too, just not all of the time). I had to learn the importance of my call and respond to Christ with my best efforts, my obedience out of love and gratitude so I could be my best and follow His lead.

The effort to memorize Scripture is something all Christians should be doing. It takes time and hard work, but we are to do this with our best efforts and our obedience out of love and gratitude for Who He is and what He has done for us. But, this is not to be a labor of pain or a work of strife that we dread; rather, it is a wondrous and glorious journey because we are getting to know Him more deeply! The memorization of Scripture is not something that engrosses us; it is not something that we do all of the time, or even a majority of our devotional life. Our study, devotional reading, and prayer should take the “lions share” of our efforts, but memorizing must have its place and be a part of our Christian life and walk. It can also be adventurous and fun!

Why We are Called to Memorize Scripture

Give me understanding, and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart. Psalm 119:34

God calls us to have His Words and promises written in our hearts! The way to spiritual maturity and the glory of our reward is not in finding shortcuts, but exercising temperance and commitment through learning, experience, and overcoming adversities. It is a long and difficult process (Acts 14:22; Rom. 2:7). The question is, *How can you make memorizing Scripture a reality in your life?* See what God Himself has to say; read any or all of these passages below, and in prayer, go over them and match them to these bullet points and ask Him how you are doing with this. By the way, here is the first set of Bible memorization verses for you to practice from:

Deut. 6:4-9; 11:18-21; Josh 1:8; Psalm 37:31; 63: 1-8; 119: 9-11, 72; 105, Prov. 6:20-22; Matt. 4:1-11; John 4:24; 15:7; 17:17; Acts 18:28; 20:32; Rom 12:1-2; Phil. 3:10; 4:6-7; Eph. 4:14; 5:17; Col. 3:16; 1 Thess. 2:13; 5:11; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16; Heb. 4:12; James 1:21-25; 1 Pet. 2:2; 3:15

The primary reason we memorize Scripture is because we are called and commanded to learn God's Word so we can learn more about Him, what He has

done, and what we can do to lead a great Christian life. We are called to meditate on His Word. Have you responded to this call?

- Knowing God's Word helps us be better at studying the Bible.
- Knowing God's Word helps fabricate and shape our spiritual growth.
- Knowing God's Word helps us experience and worship God.
- Knowing God's Word helps us know and respond to His precepts and call.
- Knowing God's Word helps us realize that God's Word transforms our minds to think in His ways and live our life better in Him.
- Knowing God's Word makes it easier for the Holy Spirit to more powerfully guide us!
- Knowing God's Word stimulates our intimacy and prayer life with Him.
- Knowing God's Word gives us useful, effective, and effectual knowledge of the Bible.
- Knowing God's Word gives us practical wisdom, guidance, and knowledge for life!
- Knowing God's Word helps God use us more and more powerfully.
- Knowing God's Word helps us in the sharing of our faith.
- Knowing God's Word gives us success in dealing with sin and temptations.
- Knowing God's Word gives us confidence in witnessing.
- Knowing God's Word equips us to be able to help guide others.
- Knowing God's Word helps encourage the spiritual growth in others lives.
- Knowing God's Word helps us to overcome life's problems and obstacles.
- Knowing God's Word helps us be content and at peace.
- Knowing God's Word helps us to discern false teachings.

Have you responded to His call?

The Basic Plan

How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. Psalm 119:9

The "nitty-gritty" for ease in memorizing is to simply select a short passage—a verse or two. Pray, read it, and then read the chapter in an easy-to-understand translation to see it in context. Then re-read your passage at least ten times in the translation you are using, such as the KJV, NASB, NKJV, RSV, NIV or the ESV. Then, write it out on a small card and re-read it at least ten times. Put it away for a few hours or a day, then pick up the card and re-read it aloud several times. You should have it memorized after a week! It does take a little effort, but it is not as hard as most people think. There is no reason to dread or stress in order to know God's Word.

The simple basic plan:

1. Select a short passage to memorize.
2. Pray over it.

3. Read it.
4. Read the chapter to know its context.
5. Re-read the passage at least ten times.
6. Write it out on a small card.
7. Go over your card at least ten times, reading it out loud.
8. Put it away and in a few hours or a day, pick up the card and re-read it several times. In a few days, you should have it memorized!

The Big Tip

Now, to make it even easier and more fun, do the above and also use a recording device such as a tape recorder, MP3 recorder, or a smart parrot. This is what I do because I have a terrible memory and learning disabilities I have had to overcome. So, for me, this was the worst of the worst of my stress and dread, but I learned to do it and have fun doing it. By the way, this is a phenomenal memorizing method for any literature, notes, text, readings, etc. Read it, record it, and then play it back anywhere you are—while driving, at the mall, or wherever. You can do this with your notes, study material, information you have to memorize, even terms and words for science, a foreign language, or math formulas. I have found this one of the best ways to study, and it works!

Tools, Steps, and Tips to Help you Memorize Scripture

Praise be to you, O LORD; teach me your decrees. Psalm 119:12

Start with the proper approach—that of prayer and reverence before our Holy God. Have an honest desire to know Him more fully and with a good attitude based on growing in Christ rather than seeking just what you want. Our minds must be clear and childlike before Him, because, when you read His Word, you are standing before the face of God—the Holy God! So, adjust to a good attitude and reverence for God and His Word. It is simply not enough to know what you want to do—you have to know the right way to do it. It is like following directions to build something like a model; when we use the directions, we build it right. When we throw them away, we get it wrong and our efforts are wasted. If we do not have the right approach and attitude, we do not get much out of God's Word, because our will gets in the way of His!

First: Pray

I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.
Psalm 119:10

This is the essential, first step to always, always starting anything—especially the memorization of Scripture and communication with God! Ask God to open your eyes so you can be confident and be able to do this with ease, passion, and impact (Psalm 119:18).

- Pray and ask God to help you memorize; ask Him for the confidence and perseverance to do so.
- Ask Him for His blessing and be positive that He will enable you to do it.
- To grow in Christ, we must desire to be with Him and to learn from Him. (Phil. 3:10; 1 John 1 :3-4)
- Prayer engages us with Christ and helps us in our best efforts,
- True obedience comes out of our love and gratitude for who He is and what He has done.
- Have confidence that Christ is working in you!

Second: Select

I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word. Psalm 119:16

Choose a short passage—a verse or two that you wish to memorize. Either start with our recommendations below or with what your pastor or mentor suggests.

- If this seems too much, then begin with one of the simple, one-verse passages.
- Choose a verse that speaks to and/or touches you.
- Never consider this as a chore or burdensome; it is our joy to know our Lord more!
- The point is to do it. Do not jump into large passages or tough passages; get to know the basic passages in the Gospels or Psalms first!
- Discover what our Lord has to say to you!
- Think Big - Think Smart, not small or with an "I can't" or "I have to" attitude; rather have a will to do it - our identity is in Christ.
- Remember the context! See the whole picture of what is going on. The reason most people do not get it is because they do not get in it!
- Set aside time and be consistent; try at least 5-10 minutes a day to practice your Bible memory.
- You can easily memorize one to two passages a week.
- Do not be overwhelmed! Yes, memorization looks ominous and un-climbable, but you have to just start. Just as when putting together a big puzzle—start with what you recognize, do it one piece at a time, and then one day it will be done!
- Keep in mind why you are doing this! Read Psalm 119 and do a study on verses 9-16.
- Remember, we are called to memorize Scripture!

Third: Read it

I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. Psalm 119:15

Read the verse that you have selected and then read the book and chapter to know its context. Then, read the verses, verse-by-verse in order, and write down what you see and learn. Then, you will be amazed at how much more you will pick up!

- Remember to read the verse in its context.
- Study the passage first to better understand what you are memorizing and to increase your understanding of what the verse means. Do not assume anything; do the research and study. Many Christians think they know something when in fact they do not, or at least not well enough.
- Read your passage in another translation or a paraphrase. If you do not know what something means, look it up in a good commentary or Bible Dictionary.
- State the reference of the passage before and after, such as John 3:16.
- Make sure to say the passage accurately.

Forth: Re-read

With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth.
Psalm 119:13

Commit your verse to memory by reading and rereading it. It is best to read the passage you want to memorize at least ten times in your translation of choice. If you are using the King James (this is great to do and my personal favorite for memorization), don't forget to also read it in a translation you can understand with more clarity.

- Read and review it; say it out loud several times.
- Then, read the passage several times a day for one week. Then slow it down and read it once or twice a day for a week; then, to keep it memorized recite it once a month.
- Make a prayer out of the verse; pray to God, incorporating the verse and its precepts into your prayer.
- Meditate on the passage—this means to reflect and ponder on it.
- Do an Inductive study on it.
- Break the verse down into its natural phrases; comas are your clue, and do a section at a time.
- Emphasize with your voice the key words. Try to stress certain words and phrases with different pitch and tones of our voice, like actors and public readers do.
- Study at times when your biological clock is active, i.e. if you are a morning person, study in the morning more than in the evening. (Take your temperature every hour on the hour throughout the day and chart it. Do this 2 or 3 times in a week; chart the times your temperature is highest and study hardest at those times.)
- Think positively and affirm yourself. A negative attitude will get you just that...a negative response from Scripture and a disconnection from what God

is seeking to teach you and use you in others' lives as well. A positive attitude will also help you achieve what Christ has for you and others in your life, too.

- Use memorizing techniques like making up stories to help you remember, or tie what you are learning to something else that you know as a synonym.
- While you read, say it out in a loud voice!
- Imagine yourself as a participant—as if it is your story or as if you are there.
- Let God speak to you; the main goal is to know our Lord better, not just to gain more knowledge!
- Try to create a jingle or write a song!

Fifth: Write it Out

I hold fast to your statutes, O LORD; do not let me be put to shame. Psalm 119:31

Write out your verse on a small index card or flash card along with the passage reference. Then, use your card as a memory tool to look at, and re-read it at least 10 times. Put it away for a few hours, then pick up the card and re-read it aloud several times.

- How to review with 3x5 cards: study in short periods, i.e. five to 10 minutes at a time, and then go on to something else. Then, do it again for five to 10 minutes and so on. (The human mind has a short attention learning span.) Take breaks, carry cards around with you, and do this at different times throughout the day.
- Studying for five to 10 minute segments 10 times a day is much more efficient than studying for four hours at a time, and you will grasp it better!
- Read the card quietly to yourself several times and also aloud; review—spending the time and repetition is your key to success.
- Carry some of the cards you have done with you when you go places for practice and review.
- You can also write out your passage several times on a note pad. Repetitive writing helps the words sink deeper into your mind.
- You can also write verses down on “post-it” notes and stick them in prominent places where you will see them often, such as your bathroom mirror, computer monitor, desk top, refrigerator door...not on your car or where you should not be distracted (This is my wife's favorite way to do it)!
- Make sure the passage is written down accurately.
- On the card, you can also write down the category, such as a promise, a command, or a fruit, etc.
- Organize your cards into categories such as in chronological order or in topics such as Holiness, Salvation, God's Character, Sovereignty, Faith, Assurance, etc.

Sixth: Record the Passage,

Let me understand the teaching of your precepts; then I will meditate on your wonders. Psalm 119:27

Take the passage you decided to memorize and after you have written it down, then read your passage into a voice recorder, and play it back over and over. You can use a “walkman” or “Pod” device so you can do this while you are shopping, driving, or just about anywhere (just not during church).

- Use a recording device such as a tape recorder, MP3 recorder, or electronic digital voice recorder.
- For synergy to memorize faster and better, combine the audio and your reading together!
- This works and it works great!

Seventh: Persevere

I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. Psalm 119:14

Be persistent, and set goals in your endeavors to memorize God’s Word. Once you have a good plan and discipline, stick to it, and do not give up. At the same time, be realistic and do not set goals that you cannot accomplish. (2 Peter 3:16).

- Apply the verse to your life; if His Word is not changing, transforming, and affecting you, seek why by asking Him. Memorization does us no good unless we are doing something with it. We are to submit and apply His Word, not just know it.
- Use an accountability partner with whom you can confer.
- An accountability partner can help in two ways—to check you and keep you steady on the journey and also to quiz you on your verses.
- Remember to keep it up; if you do not use it, you will eventually lose it.
- Keep track and arrange your Bible memorization cards in categories. Keep the cards you are currently working on together for daily review. Once you know a passage on your card, place it in a separate pile, so you can review once a month, and keep the ones you do not know well separated from the others so you can review them more often. You can also have a pile you can put together to do at a future date.

Now, you should have a verse memorized! Don’t expect instant success; it takes time. For slow learners like me, it may take a month; for others, a week. Remember, it does take effort, but not as much effort or hard work as most people might think. There is no reason to dread or be stressed as you attempt to memorize God’s most precious Word!

If this still seems overwhelming, take heart, you can do it. A lot of information is given; just do “the basic plan” at first. Once you have it down, look

over the rest of the tools and tips and use these useful principles to develop your method. Also, try to start with *baby steps*—take on one short passage and engage it for 10 minutes a day for a month. Then, in the second month, increase it to 2 passages and 15 minutes, the third month, 3 passages and 20 minutes, and so on. Your goal is to spend at least one hour a day in devotions, Bible reading, prayer, and Scripture memory—free from distractions and a wandering mind. If this is too much and your mind wanders, just remember to break the time up throughout the day—one-third in the morning, such as your reading, then one-third memorizing during the midday, and the last one-third, such as your devotions or study, before bed. And, in each section, pray.

The key to memorization is this: STUDY! REVIEW! and PERSEVERE! Repetition is the best way to engrave the verses into your mind. If you do the above steps, bit by bit, then more and more, you will be on your way to a more distinctive, purposeful, and productive Christian life filled with His power and Spirit!

What Do I Memorize?

Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart.
Psalm 119:2

Start with these passages: Deut. 6:4-9; 11:18-21; Josh. 1:8; Psalm 37:31; 63:1-8; 119: 9-11, 72, 105; Prov. 6:20-22; Matt. 4:1-11; John 4:24; 15:7; 17:17; Acts 18:28; 20:32; Rom 12:1-2; Phil. 3:10; 4:6-7; Eph. 4:14; 5:17; Col. 3:16; 1 Thess. 2:13; 5:11; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16; Heb. 4:12; James 1:21-25; 1 Pet. 2:2; 3:15.

Here is a guide I used when I was on Staff with Campus Crusade in the 80s:

Scripture Memory Verses

Christ-Centered

New Creation	2 Cor. 5:17	Col. 2:6	Col. 2:9,10
Christ Centered	John 15:5	Phil. 1:6	Gal. 2:20
Word Centered	Matt. 4:4	Acts 20:32	Col. 3:16
Prayer Centered	John 16:24	Matt. 21:22	1 John 5:14,15
Obedience	John 14:21	John 15:10,14	Heb. 5:8
Witnessing	1 John 1:3	Acts 1:8	1 Pet. 3:15

Salvation

Fact of Sin	Rom. 3:23	John 3:19	Rom. 3:12
Penalty of Sin	Rom. 6:23	Heb. 9:27	Rom. 5:12
Penalty Paid	Rom. 5:8	1 Pet. 3:18	1 Cor. 15:3,4
Salvation a Gift	Eph. 2:8,9	Rom. 3:24	Titus 3:5
Must Receive	John 1:12	Rev. 3:20	Rom. 10:9,10

Assurance	1 John 5:11,12	John 5:24	1 John 5:13
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Lord's Promises

Forgiveness	1 John 1:9	Eph. 1:7	1 John 2:1,2
Comfort	1 Pet. 5:7	2 Cor. 1:3,4	Matt. 11:28
Victory	1 Cor. 10:13	1 John 5:4,5	2 Cor. 2:14
Rewards	1 Cor. 15:58	2 Cor. 5:10	2 Tim. 4:8
Inheritance	Rom. 8:16,17	1 Pet. 1:3,4	Titus 3:7
Second Coming	1 Thess. 4:16,17	Titus 2:12,13	John 14:2,3

Commands

Follow Christ	Luke 9:23	1 John 2:6	1 Pet 2:21
Separate from World	2 Cor. 6:17,18	Rom. 12:2	1 John 2:15,16
Strong in Temptation	Jam. 1:12	1 Cor. 16:13	1 Pet. 1:6,7
Endure Suffering	Phil 1:29	1 Pet. 4:12,13	Heb. 12:3
Spiritual Warfare	Eph. 6:10,11	1 Tim. 6:11,12	2 Tim. 2:3,4
Go	John 20:21	2 Cor. 5:19,20	Mark 16:15

Spiritual Fruit

Love	John 13:34,35	1 John 3:23	Gal. 5:22,23
Joy	John 15:11	Phil. 4:4	2 Cor. 6:10
Peace	John 14:27	John 16:33	Phil. 4:6,7
Patience	Heb. 10:36	James 1:2-4	1 Pet. 2:20
Faith	Acts 27:25	Heb. 11:6	Rom. 4:20,21
Humility	Phil. 2:3,4	Matt. 20:26,27	1 Pet. 5:5,6

God's Word

Inspiration	2 Tim. 3:16	2 Pet. 1:20,21	1 Thess. 2:13
Read It	Rev. 1:3	1 Tim. 4:13	Deut. 17:19
Study It	Acts 17:11	2 Tim. 2:15	Ps. 119:9,11
Love It	Ps. 138:2	Jer. 15:16	Job 23:12
Meditate on It	Ps. 1:2,3	Josh. 1:8	Ps. 119:148
Hear It	Rom. 10:17	James 1:22	Luke 11:28

From: [Campus Crusade for Christ International](http://CampusCrusade.org)

Are you Ready? What is Stopping You?

Peter, in his first epistle, was seeking to pastor his people so they could make sound decisions and not be afraid of those who hated God and came against them (1 Pet. 3:15-17). The key to doing this is to make a firm, ongoing, and deep commitment to know Christ and His Word. This is necessary for us to not just be prepared, but to stay ahead of what is coming. We are the

ambassadors of Christ and are called to show, through our lifestyle and words, that He is The Lord and Savior. We may come across hostile people who hate God and will hate us for being in Him; even so, we are still to operate with respect and gentleness. The only true way to grow and know this is to grow and know Him (Psalm 56:4; Luke 12:4-7; Rom. 8:31-39; 2 Cor. 5:20)!

The call to know His Word is the call to know Him, to be better in our Christian life, and to do something with what He has given us. This is also a crucial aspect in *apologetics*, which is the act of giving a defense such as a lawyer defends his client. We should know about our faith, and with our best efforts and abilities, share it with others, *and even use words when necessary!* A good Christian should know about the Bible and faith, and practice it, not only to grow, but also to share it with other people. We do not need to know all of the answers (I certainly do not), but we should know where to get the info and then get back to them. We are always to share with maturity of character even when others combat us. And, to have His Word in our Heart is power upon power to make this all happen. Our faith will eventually undermine those who are against us. Our *apologetic* ("answer"), when we recite our verses to others, is always to be given with love, consideration, and tact—never in degrading terms.

Peter was trying to get his people to trust Christ further and thus have more patience when times got tough. Having God's Word in our hearts and minds forms us, and makes us stronger and better when life and people come against us. We are called to surrender to His authority and precepts, allowing Him to be God, and allowing Him to lead and shape us. We can show the love of Christ by also loving his Word and being dedicated to knowing as much as we can.

Let Us Be Doers of His Mighty Word!

Check out some passages that tell us that discipleship and mentoring are not an option, but a command: Matthew 28:16-20; Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; Galatians 6:1-10; Mark 1:35 – 2:12. We must follow out of obedience, and mentor in a multigenerational lifestyle, caring for the total person. This will move us from just playing church to really *being* a church.