

## Effective Ways to Memorize Scripture

*Keep my commands and you will live;  
guard my teachings as the apple of your eye.*

*Bind them on your fingers;  
write them on the tablet of your heart.*

Proverbs 7:2-3

*We must study the Bible more.  
We must not only lay it up within us,  
but transfuse it through the whole texture of the soul.*

Horatius Bonar

Paul wrote to the Colossians, “Let the word of God dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom.” The opposite of letting God’s Word dwell in you richly, is for God’s Word to dwell in you poorly. I want to be rich and overflowing with the truth of God’s word, and I’m sure you do too. Here are a few tips to helping you discover success when it comes to scripture memory.

### Picture It

When I was in high school, my dad purchased two tickets to Scripture memory seminar, and since my mom couldn’t go, he took me. I must admit, I really wasn’t looking forward to spending my Saturday learning how to memorize Scripture, but it turned out to be the beginning of a great journey for me and helped me to not only memorize Bible verses, but also it helped me to memorize facts and information throughout my college years. I remember during sorority pledging, we were required to memorize our pledge book and all the information about each of the hundred or so sorority members, including their hometowns, their majors, and even the names of their boyfriends. It would probably be considered hazing now, but back then, it was just normal practice. My pledge sisters were jealous because I was able to memorize it all quickly and easily all because of the method I learned at the Scripture memory conference with my dad.

Basically, the key tool was to use crazy, funny pictures to represent words. Our minds tend to remember pictures better than it remembers words, so if you can turn a verse into a picture, it helps to seal it in your memory. Let me show you what I mean. Let’s learn Hebrews 10:24 together. Whenever you start to learn a verse, I would encourage you to write it down either in a notebook or on an index card. Say the verse aloud and think about what it is saying. Here’s the verse:

Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

Now we are going to draw silly pictures to help us remember the words. You may enjoy this method of memorizing or you may not. Stick with me and try it out just for this verse and see if it works for you. Trust me, you don’t need to be a great artist to draw these pictures—simple little drawings work just fine. Okay, so are you ready? First, for the words “Let us,” draw a head of lettuce. Yes, that’s right, a head of lettuce like you would use to make a salad. Remember, I said these pictures need to be crazy, because we are more likely to remember odd pictures than simply normal ones. Now draw a stick figure of a person with a striped prison suit

on. Draw a jug of cider in his hand. You just drew a con (convicted criminal) with cider, which stands for *consider*. For the word *how* I would put a large question mark with an H on the top. See, now you have the first part of the verse in picture form, “Let us consider how...”

For the word *we*, I always draw a little slide because I think of kids saying “wheeeee” as they go down the slide. You may have another way you want to picture *we*, but for me, that’s the symbol I consistently use. Next is the word *may*, and I always draw a maypole. Over the years I’ve gotten to know my little signals for words, and I’m sure you will too. I drew a maypole at the end of the slide. The next word in our verse is *spur*, so I drew cowboy spurs. It helps to connect the spurs to the maypole. Now remember these are really simple little drawings—nothing elaborate. I just sketch enough to help me begin to picture the silly drawings in my mind.

For *one another*, I drew a large number one and then another smaller one beside it. For the word *on* you can either draw an off/on switch or put an arrow pointing on and toward the rest of the verse. I used a heart to represent *love* and a helping hand to demonstrate *good deeds*. Here’s how my crazy picture looked:



As far as remembering the reference, you can draw pictures for that as well. You could think of a picture that you will use for each book of the Bible. For instance for “Hebrews” you could draw a stick figure of a man brewing coffee (he brews). You can also think of a picture for each number (like a surfboard for the number ten, a Noah’s ark for a two, and a golf club for a four). I find it helpful to write the number down and also look the verse up in my Bible so I see its placement in the chapter. When I memorize a whole chapter, I typically don’t memorize the individual verse numbers.

Okay, so let’s see if the drawings helped you. Take a look at your drawing one more time, and say the verse aloud. Now look away and picture your drawing in your mind and say the verse again. How did you do? I like to use a notebook or index cards to write out the verse and draw the picture. Index cards work well so you can carry them with you throughout your day and refresh your memory. You may want to post them throughout your house. Now if you don’t exactly like the picture drawing method, that’s okay, there are plenty of other ideas I want to share with you.

### Reviewing and Accountability

Repetition, repetition, repetition! Reviewing the verse again the next day is another important key to sealing it into your brain. Typically when I am learning a new verse, I will memorize it one day, and then the next morning I will try to say it, and usually I will have completely forgotten it! Do not be discouraged if this happens to you. And it most likely will—that’s why reviewing it the next day is essential. I have found that instead of getting frustrated with myself, if I will simply review the verse again the very next day, then I’ve got it. The tough part is to remain consistent in reviewing. Consistency can be hard for all of us; I know—I’m the Queen of Inconsistency.

It all comes down to forming habits which become second nature to you, like brushing your teeth or turning on the coffee machine in the morning. Every morning I have a certain routine, you probably do too. One part of that routine is while I’m sipping on that first cup of coffee in the morning, I write down several of the things I’m thankful for from the past day. Since I have my notebook open, I review my memory verse from the day before and then write

down my new verse along with the cute/crazy pictures. It's a good idea to review the verse again right before you go to sleep.

Once I have learned a new passage of Scripture, I continue to review it daily for two or three weeks. This helps me seal the passage into my long term memory. Once I really know a passage and can say it without hesitation, then I put it in a notebook to review it once a week (instead of daily). I encourage you to have a regular way to review the old passages you have already memorized, so you don't forget them. I keep a three-ringed binder with tabbed sections for each day of the week. I review several passages in Psalms on Mondays, 1 John on Tuesdays, Colossians on Wednesdays, Philippians on Thursdays, and several chapters in Romans on Fridays. I have a copy of each passage I have memorized in the notebook under daily sections, so that if I've forgotten a few words I can refresh my memory.

Personally, I find it helpful to review the passages by saying them audibly. Perhaps while you are driving to work, or right after the kids have gone to school, or while you are doing laundry or working out. For me, the best time for me to review past memory work is while I'm exercising in the morning. My brain is always more alert when I am working out, and I have found the rhythm helps me think more clearly. What about you? When is a good time for you to work on a new verse and review old ones? Write your plan in the lines below:

I plan to work on new memory verses (when?): \_\_\_\_\_

I plan to review my past memory work (when?): \_\_\_\_\_

How do you stay motivated? This is where accountability is key. Remember when I told you about the family friend who challenged me. I want you to know that without the challenge of this friend, I would have wandered away, given up, or lost interest. But because I knew we would have to meet and recite in front of our spouses over dinner, I was motivated. When you have someone who is going to ask you if you have been keeping up with your memory work or ask to hear it, then it helps you stay a little more consistent than if you are trying to do it on your own. Stop and think of one person who may be interested in being your accountability partner. It helps if it is someone who is interested in memorizing Scripture too, then you can say your passages to each other. Have you thought of someone? Write their name below:

My accountability partner could be: \_\_\_\_\_

Now don't be afraid to ask her. Honestly, this may be your first and most important step toward starting a personal memorization program. If you will make the effort to ask someone to meet with you and actually set a date on the calendar for your first meeting, you have made a huge step to getting the job done. So right now, put down this book and contact the person whose name you wrote on the line above. Set a time to meet several weeks from now to go over your first passage. It doesn't matter if it is one verse, a few verses, or an entire chapter. Take the first step by setting up a time to recite it. Write the time and date for your first accountability meeting here:

We will meet on \_\_\_\_\_ (day) at \_\_\_\_\_ (time).

### More Secrets to Memorizing Scripture

Learning the order of the books of the Bible was always a little difficult for me as a kid. I really wanted to know them, so I wouldn't look like an idiot trying to fumble around in my Bible while everyone else had their finger on the passage at Sunday school. The trick that helped me the most was learning short songs that contained all the books of the Bible in order. Singing them helped me learn them quickly, and I still sing those songs in my head when I'm trying to find a book like Zephaniah or Haggai. There are several music CD's for kids that are specifically

created to help kids hide God's Word in their hearts. Music helps us memorize items because it incorporates rhythm and sound. I'm impressed with how many moms I know who tell me they learned Scripture as they listened to the music CDs with their kids in the car. One group that creates music for the express purpose of hiding God's Word in your heart is a group called, Seeds. Go to [www.seedsfamilyworship.com](http://www.seedsfamilyworship.com) to order their CDs.

The more you can incorporate all of your senses, the easier it is to memorize. When you say the words aloud, you are not only speaking them, you also hear them. When you write the verse out and draw funny pictures you are using visual stimulation. Additionally, sometimes I will make up hand motions to go along with a verse, incorporating a little kinesthetic learning. If you like sentence structure and patterns, another memorization tool you can use is breaking the verse into phrases as well as connecting words that start with the same letter or have the same word repeated throughout the verse. For instance, Romans 8:5 reads:

Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.

Notice the repeated words and phrases. It helps me to rewrite the verse in a structured way, emphasizing the repeated phrases and words by circling or boxing them in, like this;

***Those who live according to the flesh***  
**have their minds set on what *the flesh desires*;**  
*but*  
***those who live in accordance with the Spirit***  
**have their minds set on what *the Spirit desires*.**

I have one friend who memorized several chapters of Scripture by writing out a verse every day until she learned it. Boy did she have a lot of spiral notebooks, I think she cleaned out the school supply section at Walmart. She had notebooks full of Scripture which she had written again and again, and this method worked great for her in retaining the Scripture in her memory. If possible, try to work the scripture into your conversation with someone during the day. This keeps you thinking about the verse and looking for ways to apply it to your daily life.

My friend Caroline Boykin wrote a great book called *The Well Versed Family*, in which she offers inspiration and helpful tips in memorizing Scripture. I love her practical, doable ideas for both families and individuals. Some of her tips include using sticky notes on the bathroom mirrors with one word on each note, then slowly take away the notes one word at time. You can also do this with a white board (writing the verse out and erasing different words until the verse is learned). She also recommends a Rolodex file of memory verses, flipping to a new verse or passage each day for review, and even doing a video recording of your family reciting verses, which gives your family a fun way to review. Caroline has many creative tips, so I encourage you to go to her website at [www.wellversedliving.com](http://www.wellversedliving.com).

#### What to Memorize

I'll tell you a few of my favorites, but more important, I would encourage you to begin keeping your own personal list of passages as you read God's Word. I have chosen seven passages which I say aloud every single morning. You will see that I use different translations for different passages. Generally I like to memorize in New International Version, but sometimes

I will memorize in New Living Translation or English Standard Version. My daily passages are as follows:

*Psalm 37:23-24 (NLT)*

The LORD directs the steps of the godly.  
He delights in every detail of their lives.  
Though they stumble, they will never fall,  
for the LORD holds them by the hand.

*Psalm 62:5-8*

Let all that I am wait quietly before God,  
for my hope is in him.  
He alone is my rock and my salvation,  
my fortress where I will not be shaken.  
My victory and honor come from God alone.  
He is my refuge, a rock where no enemy can reach me.  
O my people, trust in him at all times.  
Pour out your heart to him,  
for God is our refuge.

*John 15:5*

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

*Ephesians 3:16-21*

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

*Psalm 23 (NLT)*

The LORD is my shepherd;  
I have all that I need.  
He lets me rest in green meadows;  
he leads me beside peaceful streams.  
He renews my strength.  
He guides me along right paths,  
bringing honor to his name.  
Even when I walk  
through the darkest valley,  
I will not be afraid,

for you are close beside me.  
Your rod and your staff  
protect and comfort me.  
You prepare a feast for me  
in the presence of my enemies.  
You honor me by anointing my head with oil.  
My cup overflows with blessings.  
Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me  
all the days of my life,  
and I will live in the house of the LORD  
forever.

*Hebrews 10:23-25*

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

*2 Peter 1:3-4 (NLT)*

By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.

This is an excerpt from my book *Becoming a Woman of the Word*. You can order it from the resource page on this website.