

Ideas for Encouraging Bible Memorization in the Home and in the Church

FOR PARENTS

Bible memorization is most effective when parents memorize along with their children doing systematic practice and review at home. The Children's Ministry Department ministers to the whole family by holding out Bible memorization as a parental privilege and responsibility, as well as by providing encouragement, resources, learning opportunities, and creative reinforcements for home use, classroom use, and for the church as a body.

The responsibility of overseeing their children's Bible memorization can be intimidating for some parents. Some adults have never memorized the Word themselves, so they don't know where to begin in leading their children. Many parents view Bible memorization as a task of their children's Sunday School teachers or Wednesday night club leaders. The Children's Ministry Department can help by using many different means to encourage parents to be actively involved. The most reluctant of parents can end up being the most appreciative of these efforts as they see the habit of Bible memorization take root in their own lives and bear fruit in their families.

Ideas:

- Put reminder notes in your Children's Ministry newsletter and/or in the general church newsletter/bulletin/website.
- At least once each quarter, provide parents with a list of verses each class is memorizing along with helpful hints.
- Promote family memorization as part of other church ministries (e.g. from the pulpit, Men's Ministries, Women's Ministries, small groups, etc.)
- Ask your preaching pastor to emphasize the importance of the discipline of Bible memorization in the corporate life of the church. It really encourages children when they see adults devoted to Bible memorization. For inspiration from another pastor, encourage your pastor to read or listen to some applicable sermons:
<http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/thy-word-i-have-treasured-in-my-heart>
<http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/taste-see-articles/why-memorize-scripture>
<http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/holding-fast-the-word-of-life-in-2010>
<http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/if-my-words-abide-in-you>
<http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/meditate-on-the-word-of-the-lord-day-and-night>
Charles Spurgeon: <http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/2506.htm>
- Start a church-wide memorization program to encourage people of all ages to memorize. At Bethlehem, we have found Bible memorization to be a powerful tool for unifying the church body. For information on Children Desiring God's Fighter Verse Program (an individual or church-wide program), see: <http://www.fighterverses.com>.
- Recommend specific resources/helps
 - » Booklet: [An Approach to the Extended Memorization of Scripture \(pdf\)](#) by Dr. Andrew M. Davis—an excellent resource.

» Websites (some of these send daily/weekly reminders for Bible memory practice):

<http://scripturetyper.com/>

<http://www.memverse.com/>

<http://www.downes.ca/memorization.htm> (memorization tool)

<http://www.biblememory.org/>

<http://www.memoryverses.org/>

» Software:

<http://www.memorizehisword.com/>

» Verse Card generators:

<http://www.sundayschoolprintables.com/versecards/>

<http://www.mcscott.org/>

• Show parents how to use the latest technology (e.g., mp3 players, computers, record mode on cell-phones, etc.) to facilitate listening to/recording Bible verses

» iPod/iPad:

<http://www.crossway.org/blog/2009/02/memorizing-scripture-with-your-ipod/>

<http://www.fighterverses.com/product/iphone-ipad-app/>

• Suggested inspiration books:

» *Ten P's in a Pod* by Arnold Pent III

» *Scripture by Heart: Devotional Practices for Memorizing God's Word* by Joshua Choonmin Kang

» *His Word in My Heart* by Janet Pope

• Suggested Bible memory music CDs:

» GT and the Halo Express, The Donut Man, Hide 'em in Your Heart, or [Seeds Family Worship](#)

» Mark Altrogge's Hide the Word series (<http://www.forevergratefulmusic.com/>) free downloads: <http://www.theblazingcenter.com/category/free-scripture-song>

WORKING WITH BABIES & TODDLERS

Rhythm and hand motions—Choose just two or three basic verses (e.g. Gen 1:1, Eph 6:1, Ps 56:3) to practice for the whole year in each nursery. Have the verses and hand motions posted (in a large font) in the nurseries (in play areas, over changing tables, etc.) so that each week's workers are doing exactly the same thing. Provide copies of the verses and hand motions for parents to practice at home. This is a great way to grow parents into the habit of memorizing with their children.

Magnetic verse cards—Send home one verse card each month (laminated and with a refrigerator magnet) with a matching set of larger cards on a ring.

WORKING WITH ELEMENTARY-AGED CHILDREN

Verse cards—Each of the Children Desiring God curricula has a set of verses cards designed to go with it. It is helpful for children have their own set of cards or a list of verses that will be covered during the year, in addition to them being listed in on the weekly take-home pages.

Rhythm and hand motions—Repeat the verse aloud in a syncopated rhythm with clapping or hand motions (consider using some American Sign Language signs). This can be especially helpful for your kinesthetic learners!

Repetition—Simple repetition is the best way to lead children in memorization. This can be worked into either the large group or small group time. After you've led the children through a verse several times aloud, go through the verse (using a whiteboard or an overhead) and dissect it, explaining any unfamiliar words and making theological connections. Be sure to look at the verse from the knowledge-level of your students, remember that some words have more than one meaning or a meaning unique to the Bible (e.g. "yoke" in Matthew 11:28-30 will sound like "yolk" to a young child; even an older student won't have a full understanding of what a "yoke" is—without that understanding, much of the powerful impact of the passage can't be grasped).

The Real-Life Game—As children get a collection of verses memorized, help them to see how to apply verses to life. Describe real-life situations. For example: "You're on the way to the hospital in an ambulance..." "Your family ran out of gas in a remote area..." "You just found out that the vacation you've been excited about is cancelled...". Ask children to call out verses that would be helpful in such situations. (e.g. "When I'm nervous about taking a test..." → "Cast all your anxiety on Him, for He cares for you (1 Pe 5:7)"—or—"When I'm tempted to respond to anger..." → "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a hard word stirs up anger. (Prov 15:1)" It's interesting to see how many verses apply to the same situation. Always try to move Bible memorization from the task to the application! As children get used to making applications, use situations that are more and more subtle. Also, play the game in the reverse: have the children call out the situations and have the adults come up with the verses.

Alternate Idea: Cut out magazine pictures of people in various situations (e.g. family stranded by a broken down car) and mount them onto cardstock. Divide the class into groups, pass out the pictures, and see what verses the children come up with—let them use their Bibles instead of relying on their memories—teach them how to use concordances to find a verse they're hunting for. Share the answers in the large group setting. Drills like this can be done over and over, just like sword drills. This children will bring more verses and experience to the drill as they grow older.

The Real-Life Reporting—Ask your students to report times when they or their family have recalled a certain verse in a real-life moment of need. Be watchful about such events in your own life and be sure to share with your class.

Bible Memory jeopardy—Call out a reference or a keyword and ask children to recite the verse.

Church Website—Post each year's assigned Bible memory verses for each Sunday School department on the church website, along with memory helps. Post the whole verse/passage and reference and encourage parents to cut and paste or download them for use around their home.

Music—Put each verse to a traditional folk tune or hymn tune. Burn CDs to send home with children. See also the list under resources (above).

Whiteboard Erasing Game—Print the whole verse and reference on the board, have the children repeat it aloud several times, then start randomly erasing words, one at a time, until the whole verse is erased. This game can even be used with children who are learning to read.

Posters—Design a poster of the week's verse to help in the learning process and to use for weekly review. This is a good project for small group time or for students who get to class early.

Magnets—Print up verses with small illustrations (Google™ images has many free graphics), laminate them, and add magnets. Send one home with each child each week.

Illustrations—Have children illustrate their verses. Select some of the verses to frame and have hung around the church building or in the classroom. Use illustrations on note cards as gifts to parents or for teachers to use in their correspondence with students. Send students' artwork to shut-ins or the ill.

Border sheets—Provide border sheets to write verses and illustrate.

Notebooks—Have children put their illustrated verses into a small binder that they can also use for learning to take notes during sermons.

Mini-posters—Have the children make little posters on cardstock to hang up at home.

Prizes—Give a small piece of candy or a sticker to children who have learned their verses.

Pencils—Have pencils imprinted with an appropriate phrase as memory awards.

Class Prize—Each time a child learns a verse, put a bead/penny/token into a jar. Tell the children that when the jar is full, you'll bring a treat for the whole class.

Tape-recording/Video-recording—Make an audiotape or CD or DVD of your class saying their verse, adding a new one each week. At the end of the year, make a copy for each child. All children love to hear and see themselves!

Puzzle—As a class or small group, make a jigsaw puzzle of each verse.

Voicemail—Designate a special church voice mailbox or your own at home, for children to call to record their verses.

Chalk drawings—Take the children out to the sidewalk to write out and illustrate a verse using sidewalk chalk. This will bless people as they leave the building.

Verse tree—Spray paint a tree branch white or gold and prop it up in a bucket (with rocks or gravel). Cut out a different seasonal shapes (e.g. autumn leaves, snowflakes, hearts, etc.) for the children to write verses on. Enjoy watching the tree bear fruit!

Wall scene—Make a large scene on a classroom wall that students can add images (labeled with verse references) to each week (e.g. fishing net with fish, or a treasure chest with gems, or a space scene with stars, or a castle with knights, or a brick wall with bricks—illustrating a foundation).

Verse box—Decorate a small box as a gift and, each week, give the students their verses out of it. Or use a small treasure box and give the children their verses as treasures (cut out in the shapes of gems or coins).

Sticky notes—Provide sticky notes and have the children write out their own reminders to memorize, which they can post at home.

Modeling—Choose a lengthy chapter or a whole book of the Bible to memorize. Commit to your class to review it each week for THEIR encouragement.

Encouragement notes—Print the weekly verse on postcards and send them to your students each week to remind them to work their verses.

Greeting cards—Have the children illustrate verse cards that can be sent to those who are ill or to shut-ins. Make the cards available to church staff and others who make hospital/home visits.

Charts—Make a chart on which students can record verses they've learned (or a card file, if you'd rather not have students' progress openly displayed). Designate one adult in the class or department to listen to verses as the children come into the classroom. This can also be done during small group time. 100s charts (math resource) can be colored in (one space for each verse). Send blank charts home to parents to chart their children's verses.

Cups—Print up verse labels to stick on disposable cups to send home with the children.

T-shirts—Have children bring in plain t-shirts (or buy them at a thrift store!). Each week use fabric markers to add a new verse reference. Send the shirts home with the children (or on them!) at the end of the year!

Bible bags—Design special Bible bags for children to be given after a certain amount of verses have been learned. At BBC, the children are given a blue Bible bag (with a castle on the front) when they earn their 5th verse. Then, for each 5 verses after that, they earn a star to be sewn/glued onto their bags. CDG carries this resource (<http://www.childrendesiringgod.org/resources/resource.php?id=6&productPageId=1>). This is a concrete way of demonstrating that the church is partnering with the family in the effort of Bible memorizing.

Knight collection—At BBC we use a small metal knight as an incentive (1 knight for each 25 verses). These little knights can be found at some party/gift stores (<http://www.childrendesiringgod.org/resources/resource.php?id=6&productPageId=1>). Playmobil makes knights that have separate parts (swords, shields, etc.) that children could earn as they progress (http://store.playmobilusa.com/on/demandware.store/Sites-US-Site/en_US/Product-Show?pid=5825&cgid=Ritter).

Get a Knight for your church!—If you are using the Fighter Verse Program, consider getting a life-sized knight (sold at discount, import furniture stores—these CANNOT be purchased at Children Desiring God!)

WORKING WITH YOUTH

Approaches to Bible memorization need to be adjusted as children become youth, as every area of teaching does. The goal is that our children will have taken in many verses while children that they can apply more deeply as they grow older and that the discipline of Bible memorization will have become an integral habit in their lives which they will be able to tailor to their own schedules and learning style.

That being said, there are still means of encouraging youth and young adults in Bible memorization. Youth seem to especially appreciate being taken into the memorization routines and needs of their parents and peers. Parents of youth need as much (or more) encouragement to continue Bible memorization in their homes than parents of younger children—as family schedules become more complex and children may become more reluctant.

Family Memorization—Continue to encourage families to memorize—they will need to be more committed to make use of mealtimes, car time, coming and going time (as youth are coming and going more on their own). Suggest to parents that they make a habit of praying a verse over their youth as they leave the home or as they go to bed. Kids may shrug this off, but most will still appreciate it.

Modeling—Parents and youth leaders should stand out in their children's lives as valuing the Bible enough to spend time and energy memorizing it. Choose a lengthy chapter or whole book of the Bible to memorize and ask them to help with accountability.

Share stories—Parents and leaders should be quick to share how God has used His memorized Word in their daily lives. They should also look for anecdotes of other Christians (famous and unknown) that inspire memorization.

Youth Group Memory Planning Team—Make a plan to memorize SOMETHING each school year—either follow the schedule that the whole church is memorizing (if your church is doing church-wide memorizing) or choose an epistle or a topic to focus on. (Idea: Memorize one proverb or one verse from each chapter of a Gospel each week.)

Challenge—Some youth will thrive at being challenged to memorize long portions alone or with a group. Recommend the little brochure [An Approach to the Extended Memorization of Scripture \(pdf\)](#) by Dr. An-

drew M. Davis which is an excellent resource. There is also great software to help people memorize (see resource list on page 2).

Competition—For official competition, consider offering to train and coach a group to participate in Bible Quizzing competitions, which are held at local, regional, and national levels.

Required Memorization—Consider making memorization required for some group activities (e.g. missions trips); making it a group commitment and project.

Encouragement notes—Print the weekly verse on postcards and send them to students.

Emails—A weekly email from a students' parent or youth leader is great way to keep the Word before them. Or encourage youth to join a website that sends daily email reminders for Bible memorization (see resource list on page 1).

Social Networking—Considering starting a Facebook group to challenge and encourage your youth group in their memory work.

Music—Music helps most people memorize better but youth, especially, seem to connect with music. Seek out original music from those who use actual Bible passages in their lyrics. Encourage youth to write and perform their own music! See resource list above.

Youth Group Website—Keep the website updated with current verses. Include audio/video clips of youth reciting or acting out verses.

Youth Staff—The passion of your youth, in any area, staff will rub off on students. Make enthusiasm for the memorized Word a non-negotiable when making staffing decisions. Promote Bible memorization in the youth department and expect Bible memorization on the part of the staff. The impact of this discipline, throughout the complete lives of your students, is incalculable!

REVIEW TIPS

Memorizing Bible verses is fairly easy (especially for children): reciting and repeating is the only real way to memorize anything. But retaining them is difficult. It sends a confusing message to children when we say that Bible memory is important, but then let their memorized verses fade away from quarter to quarter and from year to year. Sunday School teachers should provide opportunities for in-class review and should encourage parents to develop a routine of reviewing verses at home.

Systematic Daily Review—Encourage children (those who can read) to review 10 verses aloud each day or for 5-10 minutes/day. It's amazing to see how many verses can be reviewed in that amount of time. Do classroom demonstrations of how to set a timer and practice verses.

Verse Titles—It is helpful for some children (and adults!) to title their verses with short (1-2 words) titles/keywords. This seems to help in retrieval of one's verses. (e.g. Label "Keep your life free from the love of money and be content with what you have, for God has said 'Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you' (Hebrews 13:5-6)" as "money" or "contentment"—just learn the label along with the verse.).

A NOTE ABOUT CHILDREN WHO HAVE DIFFICULTY MEMORIZING

Most children enjoy the challenge of Bible memory and find it relatively easy, but there are some who have a harder time. Simply not having the struggling child memorize isn't a good solution. Every child needs to be equipped with the Word to fight his/her very real battles. If you have a student who is strug-

gling with the process, struggle along with him/her. You have a unique opportunity to give that child a tool for life.

Every child has an avenue into his/heart and mind. Sometimes it is really hard to find. Pray for wisdom and insight into that particular child. God WILL show you the way into that child's heart. Ask his/her parents for motivational ideas. Just knowing you are interested in their child will be a blessing for the parents and will probably spur on their efforts. Ask other teachers and resource people for ideas. If there is a known learning problem, study resources that regular classroom teachers use to teach children with that particular difficulty.

For some children, something as simple as a tape-recording of their verses or a set of large-print verses will be helpful. For others, special attention (like a phone call or an ice cream date) from the teacher will be motivational. In some cases, shortening each verse to its main idea is necessary. Don't hesitate to do what it takes to do that each child succeeds!

A NOTE ABOUT CHILDREN WHO ARE WANDERING FROM THE LORD

It is our hope that if our children should wander from the Lord, the Word they memorized in their childhoods would continue to minister to them; convicting, instructing, and wooing them back to the Lord and will be there to strengthen them and grow them in their faith.

John Newton is a moving example of this: "John had a keep mind and retentive memory. By six, he was reading Virgil in Latin. Later in his life he reflected: 'My mother stored my memory, which was then very retentive, with many valuable pieces, chapters, and portions of scripture, catechisms, hymns, and poems. When the Lord at length opened my eyes I found great benefit from the recollections of them.'" (Ruth Bell Graham: *Prodigals and Those Who Love Them*—p. 40)

All the more reason to saturate our children with the treasures of the Word for them to tap into in the future!

PRAY! PRAY! PRAY!

- Pray for yourself; for the desire to help children to memorize as a way of pointing them to God (Dan. 12:3)!
- Pray for their parents' diligence (Deut. 6:4-7)!
- Pray for the children—that they will be hungry for the Word and that they would learn verses that will help them fight the fight of faith in specific situations (maybe far in the future) and that they would be gaining a habit that would feed them for life (Jer 15:16)!
- Pray for all the parents and teachers and children under your care—that they would be confident that God's Word is true and is a shield for them (Prov 30:5)!

***“The sum of your word is truth,
and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.”***

~Psalm 119:160 (ESV)