

Tools for Mastering God's Word

Scripture Memory



You can do it

Most people have an excellent memory. They can remember all sorts of important things such as addresses, phone numbers, birthdates, people's names, and work information, clothing sizes... the list goes on and on. Anything is easy to memorize when you are interested in it.

Armed with a plan, an interest and a few minutes a day, anyone can memorize scripture. It will not take a lot of time, but it will take discipline. But then, that is what being a disciple is about: disciplining our lives to conform to the image of Christ.

Structure Needed

One key to having an effective technique for memorizing scripture involves having the necessary approach and tools. Structuring your approach to use techniques that have proven successful for others is a simple way to get off on the right foot. So here are some components of a plan for scripture memory that is borrowed from the Navigator's Topical Memory System. You can purchase the Topical Memory system from the Navigator's Web site, or from many book stores selling Christian literature.

Topics

The first ingredient in memorizing a verse involves assigning a topic to the verse. Memorizing the topic with the verse will help your recall of the verse at a later time. Also, taking the time to think through the topic helps you meditate on the verse and understand the central teaching in the verse. A suggested list of topics can be found at the end of this document.

References

Along with the topic you also want to memorize the reference for the verse. Memorizing where in the Bible the verse resides is essential for using the verse at a later point in time. There is nothing more frustrating than knowing the verse is in the Bible somewhere, but not knowing exactly where it is. When you memorize the reference with the verse, you will always be able to go directly to the point in the Bible where the verse is.

Memorize perfectly

You should memorize the verse exactly as it is recorded in the Bible you regularly use. As God brings verses that you have memorized to your mind, you want it to be the exact words that God has spoken and not some words that may not be exactly what God said.

If you are going to go to the effort to memorize, you should do it with accuracy. It is just as easy to capture the exact words as it is to memorize words that are approximately right.

Use cards

Small cards that can fit in your pocket or purse are the best way to capture and record verse to memorize. Cards the size of business cards (2 in by 3.5 in. / 5 cm by 9 cm) work very well. Additionally, it is easy to find small wallets designed specifically for business cards. You'll need a card wallet to store the current verse you've memorized.

Recording the Verse

When you write the information on your card, use the following technique:

Write the verse as a perfect copy from your Bible in the center of the card.	
Write the Title	Write the Reference

For instance, if you were recording John 3:16 and were giving it the title "God's Love", the card would look like this:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (NIV)	
God's Love	John 3:16

You can add additional information to the card that may also be helpful later on. If you are using a topical outline such as the one at the end of this document, you could put the outline identifier in the upper left-hand corner. And, to help in your later review, put the date you memorized the verse in the upper right hand corner.

Current folder

Use a small business card wallet to hold your verses. You may even want a wallet with two pouches. Use one pouch for the current verses you are learning and one pouch for review of verses that you have previously learned. Of course, you can use something as simple as a rubber band to keep the verses together. But the edges get bent and frayed if the cards are not kept in some sort of protective device.

Historical Storage

In the first few months of your memory effort, you can keep all of your verses together in one container. But as time goes on, you will need a box or some other container to store the verses you have memorized in previous months. It is not uncommon to have a need to store hundreds of cards.

Plan

So, once you have all the tools that you need, the next thing you need is a plan. You will need to find an approach that you can sustain. So ask God to guide you as you work at tailoring a plan that fits your schedule and ability..

When to memorize

The best time of day to memorize is at night, just before you go to bed and in the morning after you get up. Night time before bed is good because you'll forget less of what you learned during sleep. Morning, just after you are up is good because your mind is fresh.

Many people will use part of their quiet time to memorize scripture. Some people would rather take a few minutes at lunch time or dinner to work on their verses. Whatever approach you take, try to establish a consistent routine.

Pace

Don't try to memorize too many verses at once. Limit yourself to two to four verses a week. You want to spend time understanding the context of the verse and meditating on the verse. If you try to do too many verses, you will not experience the full benefit of memorizing. Remember, you are not in a race. Quality (getting the verse word perfect and understanding its meaning) is more important than quantity (having lots of verses memorized).

Translation

Many language of the world have multiple translations of the Bible. Choose a translation in your language that you find most understandable. Some translations are more accurate than others while other translations are more readable. Find a translation that has the right balance of accuracy and readability. Then stick with that translation as the translation in which you memorize.

How to Memorize a Verse

Once you have the tools and the plan, the only thing left is to choose the verses and to memorize them. The vDRC studies have memory verses pointed out through out each study. These verses are a good place to start. Or, you might choose the verses in the Topical Memory System offered by the Navigators. There are 60 verses in that plan that have titles already assigned. Once you have selected the verses to memorize use the following tips to help you memorize.

- **Concentrate** - You need to be in a place that is free from distractions.
- **Read the context** – The verse surrounding the verse to be memorized will help you understand the intent of the verse.
- **Include the Topic and the reference** - Say both at the beginning of the verse and repeat the reference at the end of the verse.
- **Read the verse through several times** - Repetition of the whole verse will provide an overview. Say the verse out loud or in a whisper.
- **Break the verse into natural phrases** – Learn the topic, reference and the first phrase. Then repeat the topic, reference, the first phrase and the second phrase. Do this until the whole verse is memorized.
- **Write the verse out** – Writing the verse out once you have memorized it is a good way to check whether you have the verse memorized perfectly. Repetitively writing helps to cement the verse in you mind.
- **Review the verse immediately** – Review is essential. Spend time reviewing the verse for the next few days. Each time you review it, make certain that you are saying it perfectly.

Other Helps

There are some other things you can do to help make scripture memory easier.

Visualization

Pictures are more easily remembered than words. So it may help to form a mental image about the things that are included in a verse. For instance, when Jesus says, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men" in Matthew 4:19, you might visualize a bunch of people following Jesus with fishing poles on their shoulders, walking toward a large crowd of people. Whatever visual image comes into your mind about fishing may help you remember the content of the verse.

Put it to a familiar tune

Some times the text of a verse might coincide with a familiar tune. That is, the rhythm of the words might correspond with the rhythm of a particular tune. Using music to help remember a verse whose words have a particular rhythm can help lock a verse into your memory.

Review

The key to any memory program is the review of what has been memorized. Particularly as you begin to memorize large numbers of verses, review is essential to keeping the verses in the forefront of your mind. You will reach a point where you recognize that a verse is firmly planted in your mind and you will never forget it. But, other verses may be more difficult to retain. That is why a regular regimen of review is essential.

To assist with the review process, create three different groups of verse cards.

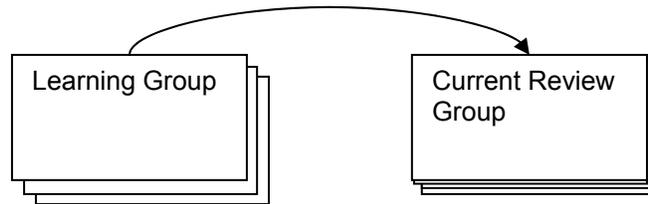
- Your Learning group
- Your Current Review
- Your Back Review

Learning Group

This is the group of verses that you are learning this week. Go over these verses every day of the week making sure to repeat the topic, the reference, the verse and the reference. As you place new

verses to be memorized in this group, move the verses that are memorized to the current review group.

The learn group should contain two to four cards.

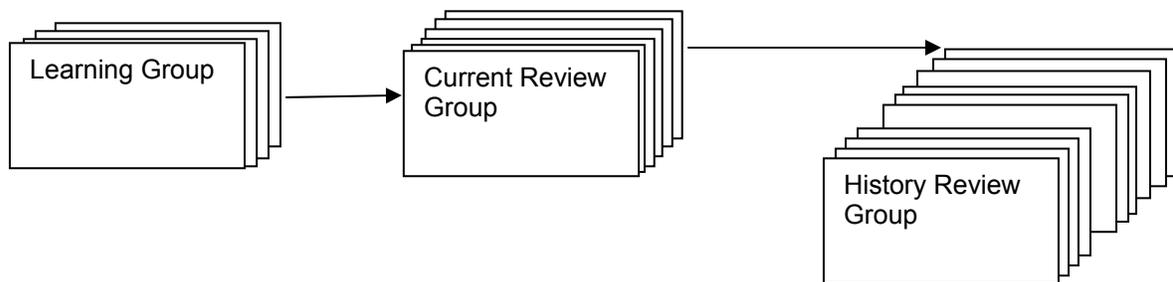


Current Review

The current review group should contain no more than 16 cards. If you are memorizing 2 verses a week, that would represent the last 8 weeks of memory. Go through the verses in your current review group once a day, saying the topic, the reference, the verses and the reference for each verse in the group.

One easy way to mark your card is to turn the card over and write on the back just the topic and the reference. Then you can attempt to say the verse without looking at the words.

As you add newly memorized verses to the group, remove the oldest verses from the group and place them in the history group.



History

The history group is the repository that you will use for storing all of the verse cards that you have memorized. Put the most recent entries at the back of the group. Then, at a regular time, take out a section of 16 verse cards and review them. Go over the same group for a full week. Then, place that group back and take the next section of 16 cards. Continue to review on a weekly basis a portion of the verses in your history collection. When you get to the end of your collection, go back and start over at the beginning.

As you go through your history group, mark those cards that you remembered perfectly with some mark that indicated you got it correct. The next time you go through that verse, mark it again if you remember it perfectly. Five such marks should indicate that you have locked that verse into your memory. You can then move that card to a grouping of verses in the history container representing verses that you have locked in your memory. Those verses can be reviewed much less frequently than other verses that you could not repeat with perfection.

When you have made it through your entire history review, you might want to rearrange your cards to help bring a different focus to your review. You can arrange your history verses in two different ways: by topic or by reference.

By Topic

Arranging your verses in your history group by topic helps you focus in on verses that meet a particular need or purpose. Having verses grouped by topic helps to strengthen the impact of the verse as it relates to that topic. Other verses on the same topic help bring clarity to the topic.

By Reference

Arrange the verses by reference. The context of one verse with another helps illumine the topic in the context of the overall work. As you go through all of the verses in a particular book, you can discern how that particular topic fits in with other topics in the passage.

Arranging by reference is helpful when your collection of verses is large.

A Topical System

A. Live the New Life

1. Christ the Center
2. Obedience
3. Word
4. Prayer
5. Fellowship
6. Witness

B. Proclaim Christ

1. All have Sinned
2. Sin's Penalty
3. Christ Paid the Penalty
4. Salvation not by Works
5. Must Receive Christ
6. Assurance
7. Forsaking sin
8. New Birth
9. Delay Dangerous
10. Judgment

C. Rely on God's Resources

1. His Holy Spirit
2. His Strength
3. His Faithfulness
4. His Peace
5. His Provision
6. His Help in Temptation
7. His presence and Guidance
8. His Grace
9. Forgiveness
10. Our Inheritance
11. New nature

D. Be Christ's Disciple

1. Put Christ first
2. Separate from the world
3. Be steadfast
4. Serve Others
5. Give Generously
6. Develop World vision
7. Be Diligent
8. Boldness
9. War a Good Warfare

E. Grow in Christ Likeness

1. Love
2. Humility
3. Purity
4. Honesty
5. Faith
6. Good works
7. Joy
8. Victory
9. Self-Control
10. Tongue
11. Unity
12. Hope
13. Fruitfulness
14. Patience

G. God

1. Creator
2. His Glory
3. His Holiness
4. His Justice
5. His Righteousness
6. His Power
7. His Wisdom
8. His Love
9. His Mercy
10. His Sovereignty
11. Trinity

I. Christ

1. Divinity
2. God's son
3. Life and Ministry
4. Crucifixion
5. Resurrection
6. Ascension
7. Second Coming
8. Names

J. Worship

1. Praise
2. Thanksgiving
3. Blessing
4. Singing

K. Institutions

1. Local Church
2. Sabbath
3. Signs
4. Marriage
5. Home and Family

L. Teachings

1. Law and Sacrifice
2. Freedom from law
3. Position in Christ
4. Church
5. Baptism
6. Lord's supper
7. Satan
8. Angels
9. Judgment, Rewards
10. Resurrection
11. False Teachers

M. Ministry

1. Faithfulness
2. Preparation
3. Use of Others
4. Exhortation
5. gifts
6. Use of the Word
7. Manner of Presentation
8. responsibility
9. Avoid Error

N. Methods

1. Pacesetting
2. Quiet time
3. Availability
4. Follow-up
5. Godly Leadership
6. Multiplication
7. Teamwork
8. Training

P. Prophecy

1. Concerning Christ
2. Concerning the Jews
3. Concerning the Nations
4. Concerning the Church
5. Timing