

Tips on Memorization

According to educational psychologists, the best time for most people to study is early in the morning, between 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. After a night's sleep and a good breakfast, we are mentally alert and more likely to remember what we learn. The best way to memorize is through repetition. There is no substitute for reviewing a verse repeatedly. However, specific memorization techniques can vary from age group to age group. The following are ideas that we have found helpful.

Tips for Young Children

Memorizing by repetition works well when teaching verses to young children:

- **Say the reference:** First, clearly pronounce the reference (“address” is easier for some young children to understand than “reference”). Then have the child repeat the reference.
- **Repeat the passage in sections:** Say the passage in several bite-sized sections, repeating each section. Repeat the sections.
- **Repeat the reference again.**
- **Review the passage** several more times, lengthening the sections each time.
- **Discuss the passage.** After the passage is remembered (usually in 3-4 repetitions), it is good to dissect it. Discuss the meaning of unfamiliar words. Rephrase the passage and try to help the child discover how the passage applies to his life.

Tips for Older Children

For older children who have not yet developed the habit of memorization, you might consider the following steps:

1. **READ** the passage on the card.
2. **UNDERSTAND** the passage.
 - **Context:** Look up the passage in its context in the Bible.
 - **Paraphrase:** Have the child say or write the passage in his own words.
 - **Most Important Word:** Have the child say what he thinks is the most important word and why he thinks so. Then you do the same.
 - **Explain:** Have the child read the passage silently and explain what it means. Then you do the same.
 - **Apply:** Have the child explain what he thinks a Christian should know, feel, and do in response to the verses. Discuss how this applies to him personally.
 - **Illustrate:** Have the child illustrate the verse by drawing a picture.
 - **Pantomime:** Have the child act out the passage, or a situation in which it would apply.
3. **LEARN** the passage. Knowing what the verse means and how to apply it prepares the child to memorize it. There are several ways to memorize a section of scripture:
 - Read the verse through completely several times.

- Write the verse in a notebook.
 - Repeat the verse a section at a time. Repeat a section several times. Add another section until the whole verse can be said. Always review before going to bed.
 - Games may help:
 - » Add a word: The child says the first word in the passage, then you say the next, the child says the third and so on.
 - » Puzzle: Make a puzzle and put each word of the passage on a piece. Mix the pieces up and have the child put the puzzle together.
 - » Erase a word: Write the passage on a chalkboard or on paper and erase one word. Have the child repeat the passage. Keep erasing and repeating until all the words are gone and the child can say the passage from memory.
 - » Mix up cards: Write each word on a separate card. Mix the cards up, put them face up on the table, and have the child put them in the correct order.
 - Music: Set the passage to music.
 - Sign Language: Learn the verse in sign language.
 - Ask the child to write the verse in a notebook and date it. Then have him list practical ways that he can put the verse into practice.
 - Each time he can put the verse into practice have him write a short account of it and date it. (This will show him the faithfulness of God in helping us live according to his word.)
 - If the child misses the opportunity to use a passage, help him see how a memorized word could have been applied in that particular situation.
4. **IMPLEMENT** the passage. Once the child knows what the passage means, he needs to learn to put it into practice.
 5. **REWARD** Once your child can confidently say the passage and can explain its meaning, he can receive an agreed-upon reward. At first, the rewards should be small and easily attained in order to insure success. Gradually the rewards should be harder to secure.

When helping children to memorize scripture, avoid distracting or trivial activities such as seeing who can say the passage with the most marshmallows stuffed into his mouth or while hopping on one foot. These activities trivialize God's word. They also disrupt the learning process. It is likely that the child will remember the activity more than the verse. If the activity does not strengthen the connection children make with the passage, it probably should not be used.

Also, these activities tend to take a lot of time and "creativity" to plan so that it is easy to lose momentum and to stop memorizing. Having a simple routine provides greater continuity and also forms memorizing habits. 🙏