



part 1 of 2—

Why Memorize Scripture?

“How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word....I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”
(Psalm 119:9,11)

This Scripture passage offers sound advice. When a child commits God's Word to memory, the Holy Spirit can help him recall those words for guidance and strength. A child tempted to yell angry words may stop when the Holy Spirit reminds him, “In your anger do not sin” (Ephesians 4:26). An example of the future benefits of Bible memorization is the prisoner of war who says quoting Bible verses he learned as a preteen helped him keep his sanity during solitary confinement.

Helping children hide God's Word in their hearts will not only help them know right from wrong now, it will also guide their decisions in the years to come. As David wrote, God's Word can be a lamp unto their feet and a light unto their paths (Psalm 119:105).

Who Can Memorize?

Generally, children in grades three through six are referred to as being in the “golden age of memorization.” Poems, Bible

verses, and stories learned at this age can usually be quoted for a lifetime. How very important it is for teachers to capitalize on this ability of the child and encourage him to memorize God's Word.



How Do I Encourage Memorization?

Memorization is work. Children must be motivated and encouraged to make the effort to memorize. Wise teachers make learning a joy. Memorization needs to be a happy, meaningful experience. So what can teachers do to make learning fun?

Know if your students learn best through visual, audio, or tactile means. That will tell you

what kinds of activities your students enjoy. Do they like active games? Quiet games? Writing activities? Crafts? Music? Discovering what helps your students learn best can help you make memory work interesting and meaningful.

When memorizing Scripture, be sure your group understands the context of the Bible verses they are memorizing. If necessary, read the passage from different translations. Explain the meaning of each verse. Help them see how it can apply to their lives now. When possible, tell why a particular verse has special meaning for you.

Sample Memorization Ideas

Use the following ideas to create meaningful, fun memorization activities for God's Word. Select ideas to try each quarter in order to find what your students particularly enjoy.

Visual

String Up

Print the words of a Bible verse in a scrambled position on a poster or on a manila folder. Attach a paper fastener beside each word. Tie yarn to the fastener beside the first word and allow the children to string yarn



part 2 of 2—

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Audio

Tape It

Use a tape player to let one, two, or more students recite the verse. Then play it back for them to hear.

Act It

Let students create motions that illustrate words of the verse. They can perform these in time with the verse recorded on the tape.

Sing-a-Verse

If a verse has been set to music, such as some of the Psalms or Proverbs, provide the song on a tape. Or let students sing the words of a verse to a familiar tune.

Chant-a-Verse

Let teams take turns saying phrases of a verse in sequence.

Tactile

Erase-a-Word

Write a verse on the chalkboard and say it together. Let a child choose a word to erase each time the verse is said until the entire verse is erased and the students can say the verse without word clues.

Relay

Divide the class into two teams. Line up each team in sin-

gle file in front of the chalkboard. Draw a vertical line down the center of the chalkboard. On your signal, let one student from each team race to the board and print the first word of the verse. He must then race back to his team, and the next person goes to the board. Continue until the entire verse is written on the board. The team to complete it first wins.



Hot Potato

Use an object, such as a rubber ball or a small beanbag as the "hot potato." Seat the students in a circle. Let them pass the object around the circle until you give the signal to stop.

Whoever is holding the "hot potato" must recite the memory verse.

Awards

Providing incentives is a great way to encourage students to learn. Offer a small prize to those who are able to recite or write the verse each week, or allow students to work toward a larger prize by memorizing several verses over a period of several weeks.

Whenever using a reward system, remember that all students need an equal chance to receive the award. It is never a good idea to cause competition between individual students. Make sure to set up contests in such a way that students compete with themselves for rewards, not each other. For instance, give prizes or points to every student who achieves a certain level. Make sure the level is manageable for every student, not just a gifted few. Avoid having a "grand prize winner." Rather, award each student equally who meets the level of excellence agreed upon.

Use your imagination. Be creative and make memorizing fun and rewarding for your group.

Questions for Further Study—

1. What is the difference between an award and a bribe?
2. What steps can you take to make sure each child has an opportunity to earn an award, no matter what his learning level?
3. Instead of competing against each other, whom should children compete against?
4. List some ways you can make memorization fun for your class.



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