

# Scripture Memorization

## *Knowing Scripture by Heart*

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Memorizing scripture is a way of hiding God's word in our hearts. The practice of memorization weaves a passage into every aspect of our lives. It helps us wade into scripture and soak in the words of God until they become a part of us and shape us into the kind of people who know God and put the Lord's teaching into practice.

Doing the work of learning scripture by heart is a form of meditation. The repetition forces us to slow down and notice the language and phrasing of the passage. We begin to own the words in a way that does not happen when we simply read and move on.

The Bible is an invitation into relationship. We do not memorize scripture in order to commit instructions for life or Godly principles to memory. It is not practiced to earn a spiritual merit badge or to become successful. We learn God's word by heart to form our minds according to the very words of God and deepen our relationship with the Lord.

While you may begin by memorizing single verses, it is important that we eventually move to knowing larger passages by heart. When we take on larger passages, we avoid the temptation to memorize verses for the sake of proving a particular point, and we force ourselves to live in the more challenging text. When you are ready to move in this direction, the Sermon on the Mount is a wonderful place to begin.

*I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.*  
Psalm 119:11

*Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.*  
Joshua 1:8

*When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, Lord God Almighty.*  
Jeremiah 15:16

*The more we commit the Word to memory, the richer our being becomes. The melodious concert of his Word will continually echo within us.*  
Joshua Choonmin Kang

*Bible memorization is absolutely fundamental to spiritual formation.*  
Dallas Willard

### Resources

*Scripture by Heart* by Joshua Choonmin Kang

*Topical Memory System* by Navigators

*His Word in My Heart* by Janet Pope

# Memorizing Scripture

Anyone willing to consistently set aside fifteen minutes a day to the practice can memorize even long passages of scripture. Begin with reading the chosen passage in context to understand how it fits in the whole book. We always want to read and memorize with the larger arc of scripture in mind.

Repetition is the key to memorizing scripture. First, divide the passage into manageable phrases. Commit each to your short-term memory by repeating them over and over aloud or in writing, and piece the phrases together as you go. Let's practice with Romans 8:38-39.

**Read Romans 8:18-39.**

**Repeat the first phrase aloud until you have it committed to your short-term memory.**

*“For I am convinced that neither death nor life,  
neither angels nor demons,”*

**Now do the same with the second phrase.**

*“neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,”*

**Now recite both together.**

**Next, repeat the third phrase:**

*“neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation,”*

**Recite all three together.**

**Now repeat the last phrase until it is committed to memory.**

*“will be able to separate us from the love  
of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

**Finally recite the entire passage** a number of times until you can do it without looking back at the text.

Continue to recite the passage throughout the day. Speak it aloud as you drive, before eating lunch, in the shower, wherever you can manage. When we return to the passage this way, we commit it to our long-term memory and live in the text. This is the work of hiding God's word in our hearts.

Some find it helpful to write the passage on a notecard and put it in a visible place as a reminder. Don't be discouraged if you need to look back on the passage a number of times as you practice. One of the great values of scripture memorization is that it is a slow discipline. So what if it takes a month to memorize one passage? Is there anything wrong with chewing on a single passage of God's word for a whole month?

## Passages to Begin Memorizing

*Genesis 12:1-3*

*Exodus 34:6-7*

*Deuteronomy 6:4-5*

*Psalm 1*

*Psalm 139:7-12*

*Zephaniah 3:17*

*The Beatitudes*

*The Sermon on the Mount*

*Matthew 22:36-40*

*Matthew 25:34-36*

*John 6:35*

*John 14:6-7*

*Romans 8:38-39*

*Galatians 5:22-25*

*Philippians 4:16-17*

*1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*