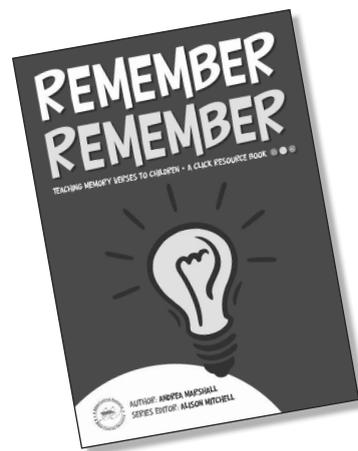


REMEMBER REMEMBER



TEACHING MEMORY VERSES TO CHILDREN

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Remember Remember: Teaching memory verses to children

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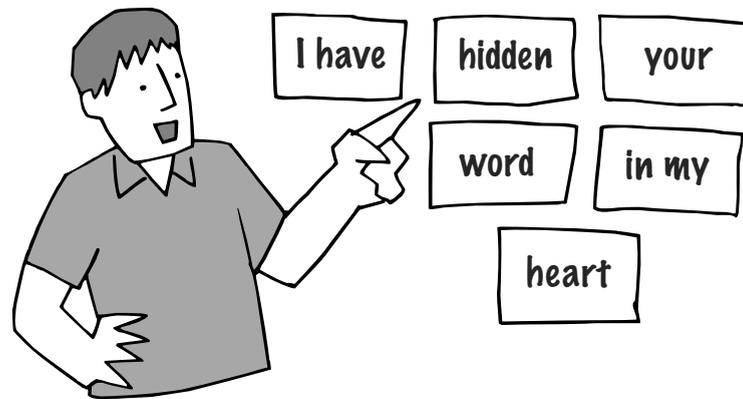
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WHY REMEMBER?

Notes for leaders

Learning a memory verse is a regular part of most children's sessions—but why do we do this, and what is the long-term value of memorising Bible verses?

This chapter looks at these questions and then considers some of the practical issues we need to bear in mind when teaching God's living Word to children.



But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 2 Timothy 3 v 14–15 (NIV)



Notes for leaders

Why remember?

In the passage above, Paul reminds Timothy that he knew the Bible from infancy—and that the Scriptures he was taught “are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (**2 Timothy 3 v 15**). The Bible is God's living Word. Through it, He reveals Himself to us and shows us how we are to live as His rescued people. Through God's Word, we meet the risen Jesus and come to understand who He is and why He came. It's no wonder that teaching the Bible, as faithfully and effectively as we can, is at the heart of the work we do with children!

Memorising Scripture is something believers have done for thousands of years: “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts” **Deuteronomy 6 v 6**; “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” **Psalms 119 v 11**. As we teach memory verses to children, we are helping a new generation to hide God's Word in their hearts as well, so that they can get to know God better and understand how He wants them to live for Him. This is why we must be careful to teach the meaning of a verse as well as helping children memorise the words.

In the book of Deuteronomy, we find a pattern of daily life for believers: “Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds ... Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (**Deuteronomy 11 v 18–19**).

God's Word is at the centre of this pattern—but how often do we actually have a copy of the Bible in our pocket while sitting at home, walking along the road and so on? Sometimes, maybe—but not always. But if we have “fixed God's words in our hearts and minds”, then they are always with us.

This command is primarily for parents. They are the ones who have the responsibility for the spiritual education of their children. Our role as children's leaders is to be in partnership with parents, supporting them in teaching Christian truth to their children. One way we can do that is by helping children to learn God's words for themselves. Those words will then be with them when they walk and talk with their parents (Christian or not)—and also when they walk and talk with their friends. One great reason for Christian children to memorise God's Word is so that they can then tell their friends what God says, and point them to the joy of knowing Jesus.



What to remember

Do your children ever check up on you? Do they simply accept all that you tell them about God, or do they ask how you know? When we work with children, especially younger ones, we need to be careful about how we teach them. A young child will tend to accept everything we say uncritically—which means we must be careful not to abuse that trust. But if a child is going to put their faith in Jesus, and grow in their relationship with God, it's vital that this growth is built on God's own Word, not merely on what their leaders say.

When Paul visited the city of Berea, he told the people the fantastic news about Jesus. The Bereans were thrilled—but they also checked up on Paul! "They received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true" (**Acts 17 v 11**). We want the children we teach to do the same—to find out for themselves what God's Word says.

This may be a good reason to collect together a number of memory verses to teach your group—verses that sum up key Christian truth. John 3 v 16 would be a good place to start! Then plan to teach these verses during your year, even if they don't appear in whichever teaching material you are following at the time. This way, the children can be sure the vital things they are learning about God's character, and why He sent Jesus, really do come from God's own Word.

You may also want to consider learning a larger section of Scripture with the children. Typically, memory verses tend to be short, and may change every week or so. But most children are quite capable of learning more. One group of 7-11 year-olds learned the whole of Philippians 2 v 1-11 during a term of teaching about the character of Jesus. We learned a little bit at a time, building it up gradually, and using actions to help us. By the end of term, every child (and their leaders!) could remember the entire section.



How to remember

In this book you will find 96 different ideas for teaching memory verses to children. Here are a few practical points to bear in mind as you try out those ideas, and choose which ones will be most suitable for your group.

Choose your verse carefully

In many cases, a memory verse will be suggested as part of any teaching material you use. Do check that this verse really does support the main teaching point of the passage. If it doesn't, replace it with something that will back up what you are teaching that day. If the suggested verse comes from another part of the Bible, look it up so that you can check the context and make sure it really is saying what you think.

Consider which Bible version to use

Whenever possible, teach verses from the same version the children will be looking them up in. If you have a set of Bibles you use with your group, then teach from this version. Alternatively, choose the version that children are most likely to have at home. Be consistent in teaching from the same version—and never hunt around through different versions until you find the one that happens to say what you want!



Decide whether to include the reference

A simple rule of thumb when teaching memory verses is that you include the Bible reference once children are able to look it up for themselves. Until then, the reference can be meaningless and confusing. So, a group of 3-5s will probably just learn that Jesus said: "I am the light of the world". But 5-7s and 7-11s would also learn that He said this in **John 8 v 12**.

Teach the meaning, not just the words

When you are teaching a memory verse, it is important that you check that the children understand its meaning. You may do this in the context of the story you are teaching, or at a separate time. Make sure that you explain any difficult words or concepts. Check the children's understanding by asking them to tell you what the verse means in their own words.

Use lower case lettering

When children are learning to read, they learn lower case letters first. These are much easier and quicker to recognise than capital letters. (This is why most road signs use lower case text.) When writing out a memory verse, write it clearly, and as large as possible, using lower case letters. If you use a computer to print your verse, rather than writing it by hand, try to choose a font that uses the kind of letter “a” that children write by hand. **Comic Sans** is an easily available font that includes this kind of “a”. **Futura** and **Sassoon** are other good options if you have access to them.

Aim for good quality

We are teaching God’s living Word—so if possible, avoid writing out memory verses on old, battered paper using pens that have almost run out! It is worth investing in good quality marker pens, and brightly coloured craft paper—and using a ruler. The result will be easier for children to read, as well as looking much better. Buying a low-cost metre ruler from a DIY shop will help you to write out long verses neatly, which will again be easier for the children to read.

Note: This book contains a number of photocopiable pages to help you prepare for the activities. All of these photocopyables can also be downloaded for free from the following websites:

UK: www.thegoodbook.co.uk

North America: www.thegoodbook.com

Australia: www.thegoodbook.com.au

New Zealand: www.thegoodbook.co.nz

Be aware of learning styles

Much has been written about learning styles. However, a simple summary is that people learn in different ways. This applies to both adults and children. A simple summary would be:

- some children learn best by **listening** (auditory learning)
- some children learn best by **looking** (visual learning)
- some children learn best by **doing** (kinesthetic learning)

So, when you teach a memory verse, choose a number of different activities from this book so that children have the opportunity to learn in a variety of ways. This will give all of them the best opportunity to learn and remember God’s Word.





BY THE BOARD

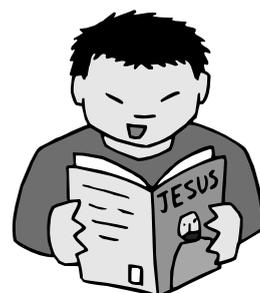
Notes for leaders

The games in this section only require the use of a black or white board, and a board rubber.

You may find it helpful, before trying any of the following activities, to read the practical tips on page 7. In particular, remember to use lower case letters when writing out a memory verse. Unless you are teaching very young children, who are not yet reading, you should include the Bible reference as well as the verse.



*How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!*
Psalm 119 v 103 (NIV)



By the board—contents

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Voices

Age-range: 3–8 year-olds

Gear

- ▶ A black or white board
- ▶ Board rubber

Use this as an introduction to another activity or as an activity in its own right. Write out the memory verse on the board. (Alternatively, you could write the verse on cards or a large piece of paper.) Read through the memory verse in a variety of ways; for example: read it quickly or slowly; whisper or shout; use a squeaky voice, sing or, for older children, use a silly accent.



Squeak piggy squeak

Age-range: 3–8 year-olds

Gear

- ▶ A black or white board
- ▶ Board rubber

Seat the children in a group. Choose one child to come to the front and turn their back to the group. Point at one of the other children without saying their name. This child then recites the memory verse in a squeaky voice. The child at the front tries to guess who squeaked. Choose a different child to come to the front and repeat the process. As the game progresses, rub out words from the memory verse so that the children are saying more and more of the verse from memory.



Around the circle

Age-range: 3–8 year-olds

Gear

- ▶ A black or white board
- ▶ Board rubber

Seat the children in a circle on the floor, leaving enough room for the children to run around the outside of the circle safely. Choose one child to be the leader. As the rest of the children chant the memory verse, this child walks around the outside of the circle gently touching the seated children on the head, one touch for each word of the memory verse. The child who is touched as the last word is chanted chases the leader around the outside of the circle back to the empty place. The last child to sit down then becomes the leader and the game begins again.



Sign

Age-range: 3–11 year-olds

Gear

- ▶ A black or white board
- ▶ Board rubber

Use British Sign Language, Makaton or Sign Supported English to sign key words of the memory verse as you recite the memory verse together. This is particularly useful to support children with special educational needs, communication difficulties or a hearing impairment.

You may know a teacher or parent who can show you the signs you need. Alternatively, check the following websites for information: www.britishsignlanguage.com, www.makaton.org or for signs used in the Deaf Christian Community try www.christiansigns.co.uk



Grandmother's footsteps

Age-range: 5–7 year-olds

Gear

- ▶ A black or white board
- ▶ Board rubber

Display the memory verse on the board at the front of the room. The children line up along the back of the room, facing the board. Choose one child, the "Grandmother," to come to the front and face the wall next to the board. The aim of the game is to be the first person to reach the board without being seen by Grandmother. As the children move towards Grandmother, she turns round to try and catch them moving; the children try to stand still before she sees them. If the Grandmother sees any of the children move, they either recite the memory verse correctly or get sent back to the beginning. The first child to reach Grandmother takes her place and the game begins again.

Play the game several times so that most or all of the children get a chance to be Grandmother. Rub out words in the memory verse as the game progresses until the children are reciting the verse from memory.