10 ENGAGING WAYS TO HELP KIDS MEMORIZE SCRIPTURE

What was the first Bible verse you memorized? If yours was John 11:35, you're not alone. And if it wasn't the *first* verse you memorized, this two-word verse—"Jesus wept"— is at least among your first bank of verses. Why is that? It's simple.

That's it. There are so many well-known verses when we first learn to read Scripture. John 3:16, Romans 5:8, Genesis 1:1...the list goes on. But the simplicity of John 11:35 is what made it great. No matter how long they've been reading the Bible, going to church, or following Jesus, anyone could memorize it. It was so simple, which made it fun not only to memorize but to share with our friends. John 11:35 broke the idea that memorizing Scripture needed to take hours and hours of practice. That's why when you tell a kid they can memorize Scripture with only two words, their eyes will light up with excitement.

We want kids to memorize Scripture because it will help them grow in their faith. We probably tell them that all the time, but that's not a huge motivation for them to actually crack open their Bibles (or, let's be honest, open their Bible *app*). Kids want to do stuff that's fun and enjoyable. They want to be engaged and connected to the activities they're invested in.

And we share this goal. We want kids to invest in their faith because they find it worthwhile. We want them to memorize Scripture because **we have our own stories of the times when a verse we memorized helped us take a step closer to God.** We want our kids to know God's words deeply so they can grow their relationship with God and cultivate a thriving, vibrant faith. **But there's a difference between telling someone it's worthwhile and *showing them* it's worthwhile.**

One of the ways we can make memorizing Scripture worthwhile for kids is to make it more engaging. Think about it – how often have you lost interest in something because it didn't connect with you? Maybe you wanted to learn a new language, so you downloaded a popular app to help you. Things started great, but then you reached a point where it was actually pretty difficult, or worse...it got boring. If we continually hit pockets of difficulty or disinterest, we'll get frustrated and consider giving up (or *actually* give up). What could help us out? We need someone to come alongside us and remind us we can do it. We need a few wins under our belts. We need reminders that what we've invested in is fun, worth our time, and something we're good at. So, that's what we do to help kids memorize Scripture, too. We keep them motivated.

So, what does it look like to keep kids motivated? Well, there are a couple of ways to get started. First, **keep it simple.** Don't throw five Bible verses at your kids, expecting them to have each verse memorized by the end of the month. Sure, some kids *love* an extra challenge, but most of your kids won't. Not only is this a lot of pressure to put on your kids themselves, but it's also a lot to ask of parents. Instead, focus on memorizing one or two memory verses each month. Choose a translation that's easy to understand and uses language the kids are likely to use themselves. Just remember John 11:35, and know the more we can simplify things for our kids, the more inspired they'll be to learn and memorize Scripture.

Next, **set realistic expectations.** You've probably dreamed of a moment when your church leadership walks into the classroom, and one of the kids stands up to recite a long passage of Scripture. We get it. We've read that story about Jesus in the temple, too. But that's the dream! That's a story we'd remember forever, but, most likely, that's a really high expectation of our kids. That doesn't mean it's impossible, but it may not be the most practical goal for our ministries—especially for our preschoolers. Set small, achievable expectations for your kids that are in line with their

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stages of development. As they grow, you can expand your goals, and maybe, just maybe, you'll get your "Jesus in the temple" moment. (We hope you do!)

Now that you've got a plan to keep things simple and set your realistic, developmentally appropriate expectations, it's time to get to work!

Here are some of our favorite ways to help kids memorize Scripture.

USE HAND MOTIONS

One of the easiest ways to get kids engaged in a verbal or mental activity is to make up some motions. Get them moving their bodies and connecting their thoughts to something physical. As you're helping kids memorize Scripture, create some motions to the verse that you can practice together. You could even have them make up their own motions or learn the verse in sign language!

MAKE IT AN ACTION: WRITE IT OUT

There's a lot of research that points to the connection between writing things down and memorizing them. And kids are more likely to remember a verse if they go over it in different ways. For kids who can write, hand out whiteboards or paper and markers to have them write out the verse. But don't stop there. Invite kids to draw a picture of what a verse means to them, too. You could even create a space in your room like a chalkboard wall or easel where they can draw out their memory verses each month.

OFFER REPETITION

"Repeat after me." There's a reason why repetition is built into the way we learn and educate kids. Like memorizing a song, repeating the words we hear helps them settle into our memories. Have a leader say the verse in short phrases while the kids echo it. Have the kids imitate a silly voice or say the verse in different styles to keep kids engaged.

SING A SONG

Kids love songs, and chances are, there are a few songs from your childhood that you still know. (Plus One, anyone?) Songs are catchy, creative, and memorable. Help kids memorize Scripture by making up a song to go with the verse. If you've got an older group of kids, you could have them write their own song or find one on the Internet. Check out our growing library of worship songs that help with scripture memorization, Grow Music! Then, just learn the words yourself, show them on a screen, and sing the song as often as you can.

USE POPULAR GAMES AS A TOOL

Sometimes, spelling things out for kids can help them learn Scripture. On a whiteboard, write the verse with mostly blank spaces. Leave in words like "and" or "the" before letting kids guess letters or words one at a time. This is a great way to reveal a verse for the first time, but it also helps you test and challenge your kids as they grow more familiar with the memory verse.

PLAY HOT POTATO

Gamify Scripture memorization with this take on Hot Potato. Have kids sit in their small groups and give each group a ball or a small potato. As the groups pass their "hot potato" around the circle, each person who catches it must say the next word in the memory verse.

PLAY PING-PONG

Similar to a showdown, the ping-pong battle is a back-and-forth challenge. Split your kids into two teams, or have two kids play up front. Taking turns, have each team say one word in the memory verse until they've finished the verse. The first person to forget a word is out. If you're playing with teams, the other team gets a point.

ERASE THE WORDS AS YOU GO

This is a great way to introduce kids to the memory verse during the first week. Write out the entire verse on a whiteboard and say it with the kids over and over again. Each time you repeat the verse, erase one or two words. Once all the words have been erased, have the kids try to recite it completely from memory.

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MIX UP THE WORDS

Challenge kids to reorder the memory verse by shuffling it up. Write or print the verse on several pieces of paper, with one word per sheet. Then, challenge your kids to put them in the correct order. You can make a game out of this by splitting kids into teams to race or tape a paper to the backs of some kids and have the audience work to help them stand in order.

MAKE IT A COMPETITION

As your kids get more familiar with a memory verse, invite them to challenge each other in a showdown. Have two kids stand back-to-back. Count to three and have them turn and face each other as they recite the Bible verse from memory. The first kid to recite the entire verse wins the showdown. For more fun, you could make a tournament for your kids or see who can remain the showdown champion for the most consecutive weeks in a row.

There are so many fun and creative ways for you to help kids memorize Scripture. No matter how you choose to help kids memorize God's words, you're helping them grow deeper in their faith. When we keep things simple, fun, and engaging, we set kids up for success and help them see how memorizing Scripture is worthwhile.

And if you're looking for new ways to help your kids memorize Scripture, check out Grow Kids Curriculum. For each month of curriculum, we give you a memory verse for your kids along with a sign language video to help your kids use hand motions to memorize Scripture. You'll also get 52 weeks of teaching curriculum, graphics, teaching videos, volunteer emails, a strategy for communicating with parents, and more. But whether you check out our free trial of Grow Kids Curriculum or are just looking for some strategies to help kids memorize Scripture, we want to help you keep being the awesome leader you are!



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