

MEMORIZE AND REMEMBER

By Lorella Rouster

When a student understands a verse or passage and perceives how it relates to his life, he is more apt to remember it and use it. Thus memorizing with understanding is the first step to memorizing and remembering. The second step is to review often and with variety so students never tire of repeating the verse.

I find it helpful to distribute memory tokens, usually illustrated, for at-home review. These can be duplicated easily on a ditto or mimeograph machine. The picture connects the verse to the meaning or to the lesson in which it was taught. The students should keep these tokens in one spot. Some may like to tape them (with parental permission) to the bedroom wall and say all of them each evening or morning. Or you may make boxes or pouches to hold the tokens and ask parents to review with the children. This encourages family participation and frequent review of the verses.

Review past verses in class too. One way is to give life-related verse quizzes. “Who can think of a verse that says . . . ?” (Paraphrase the rest of the verse.) Or you may use verses in “Sword” or “Search” drills. In addition to seeing who can find the verse first, I ask a question which causes the child to think about the verse they have found.

A Bible quottedown may be run like a spelldown, with two teams. Give a verse to the student “up” on each team. That student must begin within 5 seconds, must keep talking, and must say the verse and reference perfectly or sit down. Give a special award to the champion child or team.

Another variation is to let one child recite as many review verses as he can remember – one after the other. When he stops for more than 5 seconds, he is finished. Establish a record number of verses (or a record time) and have students strive to beat that record.

Occasionally try pantomiming a verse to the class and letting them guess which one it is. Or ask a class member to mime a verse they have learned.

Other ways to review verses are by having students unscramble a verse in which the words are all mixed up, or by having them decode a verse written in symbols.

You can also make reviewing verses fun by allowing children to fish for a verse with a magnet tied to a fishing pole. The verses could be printed on paper fish – each with a paper clip attached to the mouth – And placed in a fish bowl. If a child cannot say a verse, he must throw it back. Children love to see who will be fishing champion for the day.

Another kind of in-class review is Scripture songs. These must be word for word to be of value in assisting memorization. Books of such songs are available at most Christian bookstores. Teachers can often set Bible words to fit familiar tunes or make up simple tunes of their own.

Puppets can be used in many ways to review verses. The puppet may challenge the children to say a verse. Or he may brag that he can say it and then get shamefully mixed up, with the children setting him straight about the correct wording and meaning of the verse.

Pre-session time can be used to help early-comers review Bible verses in fun ways. Students may race on two flannel-graph boards with verses where each word has been cut out, backed with flannel scraps, and mixed up. Others may do the same on tables, using small cards.

Some children may prefer to “lace” a verse – catching a string or shoelace on pegs, beside which are words or phrases of a Bible verse. When completely laced, the verse may be shaped like a square, a star, a simple house, and so forth.

“Willie the worm” is popular with children. Willie is made from flannel-backed colored circles including one with a face and antennae. One circle is added for each verse a child repeats correctly. Children love to see how long they can make Willie grow.

Board games are also fun. It’s easy to make a simple “race” game in which a player spins a dial, then advances as many spaces as indicated if he can recite the verse he lands on. Such games may be made as in-class craft projects – thus reinforcing the verses during the making and the playing of the game.

At-home games can also help children review. The board and table games discussed may be sent home after being used for a time. Some teachers keep a game chest from which students may check out one game weekly.

Another at-home memory device makes use of the cassette recorder. The teacher tapes a few copies of the review verses, using inexpensive cassette tapes. Questions and explanations may be included, or even a short story to go along with the verses. Blank spaces on the tape may be left for the child to repeat the verse or answer the question. Let the children take turns taking the cassette home for a week for a different kind of at-home review.

A mystery verse contest is also exciting. The teacher calls three children each week and asks them to recite and answer questions about one of the review verses. Those who don’t say the verse receive another chance the next week. You may vary this by using a mystery voice. One of the students does the calling, disguising his voice. The student called must say the verse and guess who is calling. (This could be done in class by having a student read the verse on a recording before class time.)

Paper games are also fun. Try putting a review verse into a word search or crossword puzzle. Even simple fill-in-the-blanks can be fun and useful.

All these tools may be used to help students review memory verses until they know them so well they will never forget them. The key is repetition, but always repetition with variety and creativity. Help your class memorize and remember by creative repetition at every opportunity – before class, in class, after class, at class outings, and at home. Your students can remember more!