



Memorize

Overview

Jesus' final words on the cross were a quote from Psalm 22: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When he was under pressure, when his soul was crushed, what came out of him wasn't fear or rage or blame — it was Scripture. The rich, poetic imagination of a thousand-year old Messianic prophecy became the lens through which he interpreted his pain and suffering.

The memorization of Scripture can do the same for us — it can anchor us in God's presence, purposes, and peace through all our days, including the seasons when our souls (or even our bodies) are in the throes of pain and suffering.

In the digital age, most of us have long abandoned the practice of memorization. Few of us could even recite our best friend's phone number. Why store that information in our brain when we can store it in the cloud? Why put in the work to memorize a Scripture when we can just Google it? But this ancient practice of storing the truths of God so deep in our bodies they are just there when we most need them simply cannot be done by a device.

And as we build an inner library of key texts that we have put to memory (over many years of following Jesus), these texts begin to rewire our brains itself, causing us to take on the "mind of Christ."^{*}

^{*} 1 Corinthians 2:16

Reflection Questions

When instructed, circle up in triads (smaller groups of 3-5 people) and discuss the following questions:

- 01 Which passage or theme in Scripture did you choose to study and why?

- 02 How did this passage or theme grow in meaning from when you started your study to when you completed it?

- 03 Was it challenging to engage your heart as you studied? What emotions, if any, surfaced as you did?

- 04 In what ways does this passage or theme relate to you personally? How has it impacted the way you think about your life right now?

Teaching

Key Scripture

From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).

—Matthew 27:45-46

Session summary

- Jesus’ cry in Matthew 27 is often misunderstood as doubt, but it is actually referencing ancient prophecy — a direct quote from Psalm 22.
- Jesus masterfully employed *remez*, an ancient Hebrew technique steeped in oral tradition. By quoting just one line in a familiar passage, he meant to spark a chain reaction in his listeners’ minds, inviting them to recall the entire text and its full meaning.
- Psalm 22 explains King David’s experiences but also foreshadows Jesus’ suffering and divine mission. By quoting this Scripture, Jesus was telling us exactly who he was — the ultimate Messianic King promised to come in the Davidic line.
- If Jesus needed to put Scripture to memory, *how much more so do you and I?*
- Here are four things Scripture memorization can help you do:
 - Hear God’s voice.
 - Renew our minds.
 - Resist temptation.
 - Draw on God’s strength in seasons of pain and suffering.
- The goal is for God’s thoughts to become deeply imprinted in our minds, so that in both challenging times and moments of joy, we begin to think and feel as he does, seeing the world through his eyes and responding as he would if he were us.

Closing Prayer

End your time together by praying this liturgy:

Living God, whose word is living,
active, articulate, and true,
may your words live always in us,
taking hold of and illuminating us,
that in carrying them in the
womb of our souls, they may
enlighten the world with you.

Amen.

Exercise

Memorize a passage of Scripture

- **Identify a short passage you want to put to memory.**

- Here are some recommendations for you:
 - Galatians 5v22-23
 - Ephesians 4v29-30
 - Philippians 4v6-7
 - Colossians 3v23-24
 - James 3v16-17
 - 2 Peter 1v3-4
 - 1 John 4v15-16
- No pressure to choose from this list. It is best if you choose a Scripture that your heart is drawn toward.
- Make sure the passage is short enough to memorize in one week.

- **Every single day for a week, work on memorization, and after seven days you should be able to recite the passage from memory.**

- **Here are five best practices:**

- **Read it out loud.** Every day. Four times in a row.
- **Write it out by hand** to activate your motor neurons and embed it in your brain more deeply. Then, every day memorize from your paper.
- **Visualize it.** Close your eyes and connect an image to the sentence you are working on. Imagine yourself in the story.
- **Recite it.** This is called “active recall.” Every day

push your brain to recite a little more of it from memory and not from reading.

- **Recite it to another person.**

- **Here are more tips from the leading science on memorization:**

- **Consistency:** Memorization takes regular practice. Set a time each day to work on it.
- **Study:** The more you understand a passage, the easier it is to remember.
- **Paraphrase:** Put the verses into your own words to deepen comprehension.
- **Teach:** Explain the passage to someone — or even just to yourself — out loud or in writing.
- **Sleep:** Real memory work happens while you sleep. Try reviewing before bed to lock it in.

- **Keep the Scripture in your memory.**

- Review once a day for at least a month.
- Then, review once a week for a year.
- Then review once a month for the rest of your life.
- This will require a system. Choose a simple one that will work for you. Maybe 3x5 cards and a little box organizer, a calendar appointment and reminder, or an organization app on your phone.

Reach Exercise

Memorize an entire passage

Identify a Psalm or a larger passage of Scripture that has been especially meaningful to you in this season of your life.

- Over the coming weeks, put the entire passage to memory.
- We recommend you take on about two verses a week. Follow the same process as above for as many weeks as it takes to memorize the passage.

Practice Reflection

Take five to ten minutes to journal out your answers to the following three questions:

- 01 What prayer or deep desire came up in my heart as I memorized this week?

- 02 Where did calling Scripture to mind bring me peace or direction?

- 03 How did I experience God this week through memorization?

Keep Growing

The following resources were created to enhance your experience of this Practice, but they are entirely optional.

Read

Eat This Book by Eugene Peterson (Chapters 07-09)

Watch

This week, we complete the BibleProject’s “How to Read the Bible” series with part four “How to Read Biblical Prose Discourse” (link.practicetheway.org/scripture-4). Watch these three short episodes to learn more about this genre.

- *Biblical Law*
- *New Testament Letters: Historical Context*
- *New Testament Letters: Literary Context*

*Please note: these episodes are only a few minutes long, fun to watch, and very helpful in learning to read Scripture.

Listen

Rule of Life Podcast on Scripture (Episode 04)

Join John Mark as he interviews the BibleProject scholar team.

Bonus Conversation

If you would like to slow down this four-week Practice to give your community more time to sit in each week’s teaching and spiritual exercise, you can pause and meet for an optional bonus conversation in the Appendix.