

How to Memorize More Effectively

One key to remember while memorizing is that our brains have limitations when it comes to working memory, or short-term memory. Many many experiments have shown that we are able to remember about 7 pieces of information before our memories falter. However, if we employ the concept of “chunking”, we are able to remember more. Work on “chunking” parts of the material, finding relationships between verses. You’ll be able to remember more, and have more reference points for remembering the verses around those verses.

However, all that talk is about “short-term” memory. A key of Bible Quizzing is engaging with the material often enough to transfer that knowledge into “long-term” memory. Long-term memory is why we are able to remember specific details about our birthday party when we turned 5 or a family vacation to Disneyland at age 7. Those experiences were strong enough and memorable enough to cement them in our memories. I would also bet you’ve replayed those memories in your head and told stories about those memories many times. Use these same principles when memorizing scripture. Attempt to form many connections in your brain about passages. Knowing the Hebrews 5:1 and Hebrews 8:1 both start with “Every high priest” will not only help you differentiate between the two, it will help you remember each of them. This is a reason why mnemonics often are a great study aid. Knowing that “Footstool For your Feet” all have “F’s” can make that phrase very easy to remember.

That is another reason why “varying” how you study is so important. If you’ve read 1 Peter 1:12, listened to it quoted, discussed how awkwardly worded it is, and quoted it, both in your head and aloud, you’ll have formed many different “connections” to the verse, all of which enable you to recall it faster and with greater clarity.

Another point that comes from this is how you need to come back to the material many times. Quoting a chapter 20 times in one sitting is great. Quoting it twice a day for a week straight is better. When you take “breaks”, you are trying to “clear” the material from your short-term memory so that it is harder for you to recall. Each time you come back to the material and try to quote it, you are one step closer to storing the material in your long-term memory.

Another thing to consider is the “level” at which you memorize the text. Ideally, you want to know the text so well, that, when you hear a phrase or a reference, the text automatically pops into your head, without any conscious “thought.” The recall needs to be that instantaneous and natural. When you know the material at this level, any unique phrase, no matter how vague sounding, will trigger the correct phrase in your mind. You

will hear phrases like “It is not” and immediately Hebrews 2:5 will be coming out of your mouth.

An ancillary point to this is pedantically forcing yourself to read and quote the material word perfect every time. Make sure you get the correct because/since or may/might or person of the deity is important.

In all of this, keep in mind that each and every person memorizes best a different way. Finding the best way for you to study is unique to you and shouldn't be influenced by how other people study “best.” I have simply attempted to lay out some guidelines based on how our minds work.

- Maybe wearing green socks while memorizing 1 Peter 5 and wearing blue socks while memorizing 2 Peter 1 will help you remember those chapters.
- Maybe listing all the words that start a verse and creating a story will help you.
- Maybe forming a mnemonic based on all the first letters of each verse will help you.
- Maybe quoting one chapter to one family member and another chapter to another family member will help you.
- Maybe studying one chapter outside, then one chapter inside will help you.
- Maybe memorizing while sitting on a chair in jumping position will help you.
- Maybe quoting one chapter in an Irish accent and quoting another in a British accent will help you.
- Maybe always using the same study text and visualizing where each verse is on the page will help you.

So in sum:

1. Chunk material into meaningful sections when memorizing.
2. Form as many connections as you can to each verse and passage.
3. Study more often in smaller time intervals.
4. Memorize the material so well that the recall is automatic. The recall should involve “unconscious” thought, not “conscious”
5. Find your own “best” way of studying. If studying is fun, you'll do more of it.

Focus

I saw lots of quizzers “mis-hear” or “not hear” key words and syllables. Especially in Final 9, that extra syllable is enormous towards getting the question correct. You need to completely focus on the quizmaster and his/her mouth. It also helps to quote the material often, out loud. Hearing the words spoken aloud will help get a sense for what they sound like and what the differences are between similarly sounding words. Quote into a mirror and watch your mouth.