

How to Memorize Scripture by Neal Nygo

Excerpt from sermon – to listen or read full sermon - <http://www.rbcpc.org/resources/sermons/your-next-step/>

Different people memorize differently. You do not have to do it the way I do or like the way I do it. Perhaps your best way to remember something is the old fashioned way, by repeating it over and over. But, many of us really don't want to do that. And, rote memorization can be a challenge when you are trying to memorize more than a couple verses. The way I do it is actually fun, at least it is for me and I have been able to memorize larger portions of scripture with it. I'm a visual learner so I memorize with images.

I will warn you that this will probably seem weird but I do it because our minds are amazing machines. They remember images and words we associate with those images. For example, if I told you to imagine a four footed animal that looks like a horse but has black and white stripes, you would immediately see an image of the animal in your mind and you can't help but remember the word or name associated with that image, zebra. I don't make my mind or yours work that way, I just take advantage of it. I invite you to try it with me and memorize Colossians 3:1,2. Since you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

Here is how I would memorize that text. In fact, let's experiment with this. As I lead us, I want everyone to close your eyes and I want all the men to sit quietly but do everything you can to not see the images I describe or to memorize the verse. Women, concentrate on seeing the images I describe and connecting them with the verse as I tell you. Close your eyes. Remember, no noise, don't distract anyone else. Imagine a swimming pool at a nice hotel. Jesus is in his robe and sandals lying on a lounge chair and you are lying beside him on another. Jesus gets up and as he does, you come up with him as if you are attached to him. Since you have been raised with Christ. See Jesus lying down, getting up and you coming up with him and whisper the line, Since you have been raised with Christ. In the image, once you are up you now imagine you have a giant Valentine's heart card that you are holding with both hands. You lift it up over your head and can just barely set it on lifeguard stand that has a bunch of things, whistles, life preservers, water bottles stacked around. You look past all the things and see Jesus is sitting in a life guard chair next to, on the right of God who is also sitting in a chair. Set your hearts on things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. See the movement, you raise this giant heart above your head and set it on all those things where Jesus is sitting on the right side of God. Say the sentence, Set your heart on things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Now you have a plastic brain in your hands and you raise it above your head and set it next to the heart and you look down at a bunch of world globes on the ground and shake your head and sweep your hands as if to say, "No way I'm setting it down there." Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things. See the movement, lifting a plastic brain over your head and setting it next to the heart then looking down at the globes and shaking your head and sweeping your hands. Say the sentence. Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things.

Keep your eyes closed and just let your little movie play and say the words as you watch it. Jesus on a lounge chair gets up. Since... you have been raised with Christ, (Valentine heart) set your heart on things above, (Jesus in a chair) where Christ is seated on the right hand of God. (plastic brain) Set your mind on things above (globes) not on earthly things. Women, are you ready to see if you have actually memorized a couple sentences for the first time without almost any effort at all. With nothing but the first word, say it out loud all together. Since.... How many did it? Imagine if you give it a little more effort. Now for the moment of truth. Men, with no help, after trying not to memorize it, say it out loud all together. Since.... You see its like me telling you not to think of a zebra! There are some things you can learn that will help you with this but you see here that it works for many of us. A leader in the field of spiritual disciplines and formation says that one of the most helpful things a church can do is to help its members memorize scripture.

Now that we have a verse memorized, we can meditate on it so that it can be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Again, this can be a pleasant practice not a burdensome task. I'll walk us through a day of memorization and meditation. As you get up in the morning you use the verse as a prayer. Lord, since I have been raised with you, I set my heart on things above where you are seated at the right hand of God and I set my mind on things above, not on earthly things. As you go about your day, when you see, hear, read or think of things that hurt you or cause other emotions in you let them remind you, I need to set my heart on things above, things where Christ is seated

next to God. The things of God are more important than this thing that hurt me. My heart is with Christ. As something challenges your thinking or makes you worry about day to day problems or trouble in the world, think, I set my mind on things above, not on these earthly things. Lord, how should I focus on this challenge so that it doesn't drag me down with it. When you hear about a friend who has a crisis, "Lord please help them know the hope of a heart set on things above, where you are with God." Then at night as you are getting ready for, or lying in, bed you might review your day with the verse. Lord, today I set my heart on something low, I got caught up in my emotions over a situation at work. Help me to set my heart on things above. And I never got my mind off earthly things. I never even looked up and enjoyed the sky you gave me today. Help me Lord live a life raised with Christ. Amen.

Did you notice how easily saying the verse became a prayer. Now you are praying Scripture, maybe for the first time. You see how that one verse could direct both your immediate step and the way you look into the future – both a lamp and a light. Don't be surprised when you find God more and more directing your next step and your path. God is with you in your significant milestones, your turning points, your next steps and is ready to guide you. He most commonly and easily guides when we have his word in us. My challenge to you is to soak up scripture in your life. Try memorizing scripture. Try it and let me know how you do. You can start by working your way through the rest of the first seventeen verses of Colossians three. I want this for you. Practice memorizing and if you need help, ask me.

Colossians 3:1-4 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ,
set your hearts on things above, where Christ is,
seated at the right hand of God.

2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

4 When Christ, who is your life, appears,
then you also will appear with him in glory.