

FIVE STEPS TO LEARNING A BIBLICAL STORY

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Almost all our Christian “scriptures” were told before they were written down, so we are following tradition when we tell”. Let us tell scripture by heart, and teach children how to do it, so the Word of God stays with them for life.

Here is a method for preparing and telling scripture:

1. FOCUS ON THE STORY

- **PRAY**, inviting God to speak to you through the Word today.
- **READ** the passage *aloud* to yourself, perhaps 3 times in a row.
- **TALK** to yourself and describe the story to yourself (ie. “So Jesus comes to the home of his friend, Martha and she...”). Use your own words, as if it just happened before your eyes. If it is a piece of wisdom, you could say something like: “In this first paragraph, they are talking about how Jesus was there in the beginning with God. In the second one, he is life and light...”
- **MEDITATE** on the passage, such as with this form of prayer by Ignatius of Loyola: Watch the scripture “movie” unfold in your mind. Now become one of the characters in the story and play it out. Switch characters. This will help you gain a deeper sympathy, as well as situate all the characters, objects, roads, towns believably when you tell.
- **BE THERE**: Ask yourself, “What are the sights, sounds, smells in this text?”
- **PERSONAL CONNECTION**: Ask yourself “When have I been in the position that this person is in? How did it feel?” “Who am I sympathetic toward?” “Who don't I like..?”

2. FOCUS ON THE WORDS

- **FORMAT**: Make the written word more memorable by giving it a shape on the page. Give each new line or phrase its own line, hitting RETURN and TAB before each further new line. Create a new paragraph when a new “scene” or sentence begins and start the process anew. Now you will have a shape you can see in your mind's eye for recall.
- Look for **WORDS THAT REPEAT**: Highlight them with colour, if you wish. Do you see a reason that they do that?
- Notice **LINES THAT REPEAT** (fx. lines that echo one another, or are a question and answer, or even opposites)
- Talk to yourself about things you notice about the words: (“Oh look – ‘the light SHINES in the darkness’, but the ‘darkness DID NOT OVERCOME it’ The first is in the present and the second in the past. Interesting.”) Coach yourself as if you were your own student. Yes, out loud.
- Let the **By-Hearting** begin! Read one line aloud to yourself. Put the text aside and say it aloud. Do the same with the next line. Combine 2 lines. Complete a paragraph or section in this way, saying it to yourself until you are unsure of a word. When we begin, we consult the text frequently, to aim for accuracy. As we go along, we wait to consult the text, to aim for memory building.
- Learn **HISTORY** and find a **COMMENTARY** on this text. When you find out the background, you might gain an entirely new perspective on it. (Notice that this is not Step 1. Let your own honest response and wonder come first) Avoid your usual conclusions about the “message”. God’s Word to you can and should change over time.

3. MEMORY METHODS

- **WALK** and read or speak. Don't sit. This fires both lobes of your brain, aiding in long-term memory formation.
- Draw a **COMIC** or **STORY BOARD** or **GRAPHICS** of the scenes of the story on your page. Use colour if that helps you.
- Put a **GESTURE** to every key word - not for “acting”, but rather for your body to remind you of the word.
- Find lines that have a **RHYTHM**. Practise them this way, then remove the rhythm and say it as normal
- Use the **LOCI METHOD** to recall random lists, placing objects along a path in a “known space”

4. PRACTISE

Put down the text, and practise every day. It will become “internalized” within you, in the same way a song comes without effort after time. When you can't remember, stare at the floor and wait for the word to come to you.

5. TELL IT!

- **REHEARSE**: Tell your scripture to a friend before you tell publicly.
- **ASK SOMEONE**: “Would you like me to tell you a story?” Allow God to put opportunities before you. Let scripture find its way into your praying. Gain a reputation for being the storyteller. Tell the story!