A PRACTICAL PAPER ON SCRIPTURE MEMORY

The Memory Palace and the Word

Memorizing Bible verses with Ron White's Memory Palace method — the basics, the PEG system compared, the science, and the technology — with key KJV passages ready to memorize.

> *"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."*
>
> PSALM 119:11 • KJV

Prepared for Paul E. "Ed" Smith • Smith For Christ • August 2026 • Scripture quotations: King James Version (public domain)

Every believer knows the command. Moses said the words of God *"shall be in thine heart"* (Deut. 6:6). The Lord told Joshua to meditate in the Book of the Law *"day and night"* (Josh. 1:8). The psalmist hid the word in his heart so that he might not sin (Ps. 119:11). What most believers were never given is a *method* — a reliable, learnable system for getting Scripture into the heart and keeping it there. This paper lays out that method: the **Memory Palace** (also called the Mind Palace or the Method of Loci), as taught by two-time USA Memory Champion **Ron White**, applied specifically to memorizing Bible verses. It starts with the basics, compares the Palace to the similar-sounding **PEG system**, surveys the science and the technology that support the work, and closes with a verified set of King James Version passages to go memorize — beginning today.

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PART I

The Basics: How Memory Actually Works

Before any technique, four plain facts about memory. Everything Ron White teaches rests on them.

1. The brain remembers pictures far better than words

Abstract words slide off the mind; vivid images stick. Psychologists call this the *picture superiority effect*. You may forget the phrase "for God so loved the world," but you will not forget a mental image of *God hugging the globe*. Every memory system ever devised — palace, peg, or otherwise — works by converting forgettable words into unforgettable pictures.

2. The brain remembers places automatically

You can walk through your childhood home in your mind right now, room by room, without ever having "studied" it. Spatial memory is effortless and enormous. Ron White's favorite illustration: leave your coat on a chair at a friend's house, and hours later you walk straight back to that chair. *The chair stored the coat for you.*[1] The Memory Palace simply borrows that free storage system and files Scripture in it.

3. Retrieval strengthens memory; rereading only creates familiarity

White calls this **active recall versus passive recall**: "When reviewing, look away. Don't just read it again… you could be tricking yourself into thinking that you know it… you're just recognizing it."[2] Closing the eyes and *producing* the verse from memory is what wires it in. Research psychologists call this the *testing effect*, and it is one of the most replicated findings in learning science.[8]

4. Review must be spaced — and scheduled

Since Hermann Ebbinghaus's work in 1885, we have known that memory decays on a predictable "forgetting curve" and that reviews spaced over increasing intervals flatten that curve.[9] White is blunt that failing to budget review time is *the* most common pitfall in large memorization projects — more on his hard-won Vietnam Wall lesson in Part II.

THE WHOLE METHOD IN ONE SENTENCE

Turn the verse into a vivid picture, park the picture in a place you already know, say the *verse* (not the picture) out loud, and review by looking away — on a schedule.

PART II

Ron White and the Memory Palace

Who is Ron White?

Ron White is a two-time national memory champion, winning the **USA Memory Championship in 2009 and 2010**, and for two years he held the U.S. record for the fastest memorization of a shuffled deck of cards — one minute, twenty-seven seconds.[1,3] He first learned memory training in August 1991, at age eighteen, in a Dallas seminar led by Don Colton — where, as he tells it, he learned a technique he didn't yet know was called the Mind Palace, "and it changed my life and the way I memorize and learn."[1]

His signature feats are feats of *text and names*, which is exactly why his method matters for Scripture memory. He memorized the U.S. Constitution — 4,543 words, word for word — using a palace of roughly 300 locations walked through the Fort Worth Stockyards. And in the Afghanistan Memory Wall project he memorized every American service member lost in the war in Afghanistan — by his account about 2,400 names in rank order, roughly 7,500 words — a project that took ten months and about 2,400 locations.[2] A

Navy veteran of Afghanistan himself, he has written that wall from memory across the country. He also coaches students who are memorizing entire books of the Bible word for word — one student, at the time of his Bible Memory Goal interview, had completed the first eighteen chapters of Genesis.[2]

The method: 2,500 years old

The Memory Palace — the *Method of Loci* (Latin *loci*, "places") — is credited to the Greek poet Simonides of Ceos (c. 500 B.C.), who, after a banquet-hall collapse, identified the crushed guests by recalling *where each had been sitting*. The insight: attach information to locations, and the locations give it back in order. Orators of Greece and Rome used it to deliver hours of speech from memory; Cicero describes it in *De Oratore*. White notes it is essentially universal at the elite level: "I am certain that 99% of those competing in the world memory championships use it."[1] When he won the USA championship, the reporter asked the top three finishers how they did it — and got the same answer three times.[2]

Building your first palace — Ron's basic build

1. **Number five pieces of furniture in each room of your home.** Living room 1–5, kitchen 6–10, bedroom 11–15, bathroom 16–20. Walk the rooms in a consistent direction (say, clockwise) so the order never changes.[1]
2. **Know the route cold before you store anything.** Walk it physically, then mentally, until you can rattle off location 1 to 20 forward and backward without thinking.
3. **To memorize, place one vivid image per location.** Then to recall, mentally walk the route; each piece of furniture hands you back what you left on it — like the coat on the chair.

Twenty locations sounds small, but it already holds twenty verses — more Scripture than most believers have memorized in years. When you outgrow it, you don't need one giant palace; you chain palaces. For the Afghanistan project, White listed **fifty buildings he knew well** — his house, his mom's house, a Barnes & Noble, the Texas Rangers' ballpark, his base in Afghanistan — and made fifty locations in each. The buildings don't need to be in the same city or country; "they don't have to be linked in any way other than you know the order."[2]

> **RON'S RULE — SHARPEN THE AXE FIRST**
>
> White tells the story of the old woodcutter who spends an hour sharpening while the young man chops — and then clears the forest. His counsel for anyone wanting to memorize a book of the Bible: spend one or two days building a palace of 50–100 locations and learning it "down cold" *before* memorizing a single verse. "Somebody else can go off memorizing and you're going to pass them."[2]

Ron's working rules for text and Scripture

RULE 1 — HOW MUCH PER LOCATION? "AS MUCH AS I CAN, BUT AS LITTLE AS I CAN."

More text per location means fewer locations — but more risk of confusion. White's working limit for word-for-word text: **no more than one sentence per location** (two only if they are very short).[2] For verse memory, one verse per location is the natural unit.

RULE 2 — DON'T PICTURE EVERY WORD

Skip "the" and "and." For John 3:16, White images *God hugging the world* ("For God so loved the world"), then *God handing a present with Jesus inside* ("that he gave his only begotten Son"). No golfer yelling "fore," no sewing the world — the picture is a *prompt*, not a transcription.[2]

RULE 3 — SAY THE VERSE, NOT THE IMAGE

"As I look at the location... I say the verse. I don't say the image. I say the verse to get it in my natural memory."[2] The palace is scaffolding; the goal is that the words themselves become second nature and the scaffolding falls away.

RULE 4 — GIVE TROUBLE WORDS THEIR OWN IMAGE

If you repeatedly drop a phrase, build a picture for that phrase specifically. White's student kept omitting "increased greatly," so White told him: think **IG — Instagram** — and add it to the scene. (Had it been "greatly increased," he'd have used **GI Joe**.)[2] Escalation path when a spot keeps failing: make the image more vivid → read the text again → make sure you *understand* the passage — comprehension itself aids memory.

RULE 5 — DON'T REUSE A PALACE FOR SIMILAR MATERIAL

Reusing the Constitution palace for Genesis? Fine — the material is so different the brain won't cross the wires. Reusing a Scripture palace for *more Scripture*? "That's so dangerous... build another mind palace, because the data's so similar you're going to confuse it." Wait about a year, until the first passage no longer needs the palace at all.[2] (Same logic for memorizing in two languages: separate palaces, or at minimum separate locations.)

RULE 6 — BUDGET FOR REVIEW, OR THE PLAN FAILS

A TV producer once asked White how long he'd need to memorize the entire 58,000-name Vietnam Memorial. Extrapolating from his championship pace, he answered "two weeks." The Afghanistan wall — about a tenth of the data — ultimately took him **ten months**, because day two you must review day one before adding anything, and the review load compounds. His counsel for Scripture: five verses a day is doable *early*, but eventually you will hold hundreds of verses and will need days that are *nothing but review*. "Review is crucial. Allocate enough time for it."[2]

PART III

The PEG System — the Similar-Sounding Cousin

The Memory Palace is often confused with the **PEG system**, and for good reason: both work the same way underneath. Each has you memorize, *once*, a fixed set of mental "anchors," and then hang new information on those anchors with vivid imagery. The difference is what the anchors are. In a palace, the anchors are *locations along a route*. In the peg system, the anchors are *pre-memorized peg words tied to numbers*.

The peg system is old in its own right: the Cambridge philosopher **Henry Herdson** laid out its principles in the 1650s, linking each digit to an object shaped like it — 1 a candle, 2 a swan.[4,5] The most common modern form is the **rhyming peg list**:

NUMBER	RHYMING PEG	TO REMEMBER AN ITEM, PICTURE IT INTERACTING WITH THE PEG…
1	**bun**	Item #1 squeezed inside a giant hamburger bun
2	**shoe**	Item #2 stuffed into a shoe, laces tied
3	**tree**	Item #3 hanging from the branches of a tree
4	**door**	Item #4 nailed to a door you must push through
5	**hive**	Item #5 swarmed by bees around a hive
6	**sticks**	Item #6 bundled up with sticks
7	**heaven**	Item #7 floating on clouds, gates of heaven
8	**gate**	Item #8 swinging on a garden gate
9	**wine**	Item #9 bobbing in a glass of wine
10	**hen**	Item #10 carried off by a fat hen

Palace vs. PEG: when to use which

	MEMORY PALACE (METHOD OF LOCI)	PEG SYSTEM
Anchor	Locations on a familiar route	Peg words tied to numbers
Capacity	Effectively unlimited — chain more buildings	Limited by your peg list (10, 20, 100)
Order	Automatic — the route *is* the order	Numbered — random access ("what's #7?")
Best for	Long ordered text: chapters, books, sermons, lists of hundreds	Short numbered lists; **numbers themselves** — chapter-and-verse references
For Scripture	The main tool — verses in sequence through a chapter or book	The helper tool — nailing down the *address* (e.g., "3:16") and topical lists

They combine beautifully. Use the **palace** to carry the flow of a chapter, and use **pegs** when a number must be remembered — the verse reference. Example: to lock in "Philippians 4:13," picture *Paul flipping (Philippians) a giant door (4 = door) while a strong man lifts weights on it* — and for 13, many memory athletes graduate from rhyming pegs to the **Major System**, which converts digits to consonant sounds (1 = t/d, 3 = m, so 13 = "**ToMb**": strength coming out of a tomb — fitting, for a verse about Christ's strength). That is optional polish; the palace alone will carry you a long way, because verses memorized in order through a chapter carry their references almost for free.

PART IV

Putting It Together: Bible Verses in a Palace, Step by Step

Here is the complete workflow, exactly as you would run it this week, using the "Romans Road" — seven verses from Romans that trace the gospel — as the worked example. Your palace: your own living room and kitchen, seven locations, walked clockwise from the front door.

1. **Choose the passage and read it for understanding first.** White's last resort for a stubborn verse is always: *make sure you understand it.* Read the chapter around each verse. Meaning is the strongest glue.
2. **Build and overlearn the route.** Seven stations: (1) front door, (2) couch, (3) armchair, (4) TV stand, (5) kitchen doorway, (6) refrigerator, (7) kitchen table. Walk it until it's automatic.
3. **Create one anchor image per verse** — key words only, vivid, even exaggerated. Sacredness is not diminished by vividness; the image is scaffolding, not interpretation.

4. **Stand at each station (mentally or physically), see the image, and say the verse aloud** — the verse, not the image. Three to five clean recitations per station.
5. **Look away and recall.** Walk the route with the text hidden. Check only after attempting. Mark trouble words and give them their own mini-image (the "Instagram" rule).
6. **Review on a spacing schedule:** later the same day, next day, day 3, day 7, day 14, day 30 — then monthly. (Part VI shows how apps automate exactly this.)

Word-perfect memory in the KJV

Two practical notes for KJV work. First, its rhythm is an ally: the KJV was translated to be read aloud, and its cadences ("*they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint*") carry the memory the way hymn lyrics do — always memorize *aloud*. Second, the archaic forms ("thee," "thou," "-eth" endings) are exactly the kind of small words the palace image will not carry — they are carried by saying the verse, by understanding the grammar ("thou" is singular, "ye" is plural), and by the first-letter review technique in Part VI. If you learned Scripture in the KJV years ago, you hold a hidden advantage: the old wording is still in long-term storage, and the palace re-anchors it rather than building from nothing. The full worked example follows on the next page.

The Romans Road, palace-ready (KJV)

STATION	VERSE	KJV TEXT (VERIFIED)	SUGGESTED ANCHOR IMAGE
1 · Front door	**Rom. 3:23**	*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*	A crowd at your door, every one falling *short* of the doorstep, missing a glowing light above it
2 · Couch	**Rom. 6:23**	*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*	A pay envelope on one cushion marked with a skull; a bright gift box on the other, light pouring out
3 · Armchair	**Rom. 5:8**	*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*	A cross standing in the armchair, arms of love stretched toward a still-muddy, still-sinning crowd
4 · TV stand	**Rom. 10:9**	*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*	On the TV: a mouth confessing into a microphone; a glowing heart; an empty tomb bursting open
5 · Kitchen doorway	**Rom. 10:13**	*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*	Anyone and everyone in the doorway calling out on old telephones — every caller pulled to safety
6 · Refrigerator	**Rom. 5:1**	*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:*	A judge's gavel magnet stamping "JUSTIFIED" on the fridge; a white dove of peace lands on it
7 · Kitchen table	**Rom. 8:1**	*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*	A courtroom verdict sheet on the table stamped "NO CONDEMNATION," a family seated *in* Christ's arms, walking shoes pointed toward a flame of the Spirit

Anchor images are prompts for first words and core ideas — always recite the full verse aloud at each station.

PART V

The Science: Why This Works

The Memory Palace is not folklore; it is one of the best-studied techniques in cognitive science.

Memory athletes are made, not born. In 2017, Martin Dresler and colleagues published a landmark study in the journal *Neuron* examining 23 of the world's top memory athletes. Their brains showed no structural differences from matched controls — the difference was in *how the brain networks connected*, patterns produced by training.[6,7]

Six weeks of Method-of-Loci training more than doubled ordinary memory. In the same study, everyday participants who trained 30 minutes a day for 40 days went from recalling about 26 words of a 72-word list to about 62; memory athletes recalled 71 of 72. And the trained participants' brain connectivity measurably shifted *toward the athletes' pattern*.[6,7]

The gains last. Four months after training ended — with no further practice required — recall performance remained high. The researchers concluded that mnemonic training produces durable changes in brain networks supporting superior memory.[6,7]

Active recall and spacing are the engine. The testing effect (retrieval practice beats rereading, Roediger & Karpicke, 2006) and the spacing effect (Ebbinghaus, 1885) are among the most robust results in the psychology of learning — and they are precisely White's "look away" rule and "allocate time for review" rule, discovered independently in competition.[8,9]

THE TAKEAWAY

A believer of ordinary memory, training modestly with this method, can realistically hold entire chapters — and Ron White's coaching students prove it with whole books. The limiting factor is not talent. It is method plus review.

PART VI

Technology: Tools That Multiply the Method

White's own workflow is a lesson in using simple technology well. For the Constitution he walked the Stockyards **photographing each location with his phone**, loaded the photos into **PowerPoint** — one location per slide — had the text of each sentence placed under its slide, **printed the deck as a booklet**, and reviewed it on a park bench in the very neighborhood of his palace.[2] Every piece of that is available to you today, and better.

1. Palace-building tools

- **Phone camera + Photos album:** shoot your 20–50 locations in route order; the album *is* your palace map. Review it anywhere.
- **PowerPoint / Keynote / Google Slides:** one location photo per slide, verse text beneath — White's exact system. Export to PDF for an always-with-you palace book.
- **Print it:** a folded booklet of your palace, like White's FedEx-printed book, keeps review going when screens would distract.

2. Spaced-repetition apps (the review engine)

These apps automate the schedule in Part IV, step 6 — each verse resurfaces right before you would forget it. Because the KJV is public domain, it is available in essentially every one of them at no cost.

TOOL	WHAT IT DOES	WHY IT FITS THIS METHOD
The Bible Memory App (biblememory.com)	Three-step typing system — Type It → Memorize It (first letters only) → Master It — with built-in spaced repetition.[10]	The first-letter stage is active recall in disguise, and typing adds muscle memory; the app then schedules reviews for the long haul.
Remember Me (remem.me)	Free, no ads; flashcard-style verse review with spaced repetition; 300+ translations including KJV.[11]	A no-cost review engine for every verse in Part VII.
Anki	General-purpose spaced-repetition flashcards; shared KJV decks exist, or build your own.[12]	Maximum control: put the *reference* on the front and recite before flipping — pure retrieval practice; add your palace photo to the card.
Bible Memory Goal (biblememorygoal.com)	Podcast, YouTube channel, and app comparisons from Josh Summers, who is memorizing the New Testament book by book — and whose Ron White interview underlies this paper.[2,13]	Ongoing coaching and community for long-project morale.

3. Audio, AI, and everyday tech

- **Audio Bible on loop:** play the chapter (KJV audio is freely available) during drive time; hearing the cadence does half the work of word-perfect recall.
- **Voice memos:** record yourself reciting; listening back is both review and error-checking.

- **AI as a quiz partner:** ask an assistant to prompt you verse by verse, check your recitation word against word, and drill only your trouble spots — a tireless application of the "look away" rule.
- **First-letter cards:** generate a card showing only each word's first letter (T w h I h i m h…) — the single best bridge from "mostly known" to word-perfect.
- **Calendar / reminders:** schedule the day-1 / day-3 / day-7 / day-14 / day-30 reviews the moment you finish learning a passage. Unscheduled review is unfinished memorization.

> **A CAUTION ON TECHNOLOGY**
>
> Apps are the review engine, not the memory itself. Tapping and rereading in an app can quietly become *passive* recall — recognition instead of production. Keep the order straight: palace and pictures to **encode**, spoken recitation with eyes closed to **recall**, technology to **schedule and verify**.

PART VII

Key Passages to Go Memorize (KJV)

Every verse below was verified word-for-word against the King James Version text before printing. Set A is your first palace (the "why" of Scripture memory itself — memorize the mandate first). Set B is the Romans Road from Part IV. Set C is a promises palace for daily armor. Each set is designed as **one palace** — do not mix sets into the same rooms (Ron's Rule 5).

Set A — The Word in Your Heart (first palace: 6 stations)

> *Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*
>
> PSALM 119:11

> *And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:*
>
> DEUTERONOMY 6:6

> *This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.*
>
> JOSHUA 1:8

> *But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.*
>
> PSALM 1:2

> *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*
>
> HEBREWS 4:12

> *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*
>
> 2 TIMOTHY 2:15

Set B — The Romans Road (second palace: 7 stations)

Romans 3:23 · 6:23 · 5:8 · 10:9 · 10:13 · 5:1 · 8:1 — full verified text and anchor images in the table in Part IV. This is the set to memorize *with* the palace method as your training project, because it doubles as a gospel presentation you can give from memory at any moment.

Set C — Promises and Power (third palace: 11 stations)

> *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*
>
> JOHN 3:16

> *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*
>
> PROVERBS 3:5–6

> *Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*
>
> PHILIPPIANS 4:6–7

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

PHILIPPIANS 4:13

But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

ISAIAH 40:31

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

JEREMIAH 29:11

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

ROMANS 8:28

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

ROMANS 12:2

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

MATTHEW 6:33

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.

EPHESIANS 2:8–9

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

PSALM 23:1 — THEN CONTINUE THROUGH THE WHOLE PSALM AS YOUR FIRST FULL-CHAPTER PALACE PROJECT

PART VIII

A 30-Day Launch Plan

DAYS	WORK
Days 1–2	**Sharpen the axe.** Build three small palaces (6, 7, and 11 stations) in rooms or routes you know cold. Photograph every station in order. No verses yet — overlearn the routes forward and backward.
Days 3–8	**Set A** (The Word in Your Heart), one verse per day: image → place → recite aloud → look-away recall. Enter each verse into your spaced-repetition app the day you learn it.
Days 9–10	Review-only days. Walk Set A twice daily from memory. Build trouble-word images (Rule 4) wherever you stumble.
Days 11–17	**Set B** (Romans Road), one verse per day in palace two, while the app keeps Set A on schedule.
Days 18–19	Review-only. Recite the whole Romans Road aloud as a gospel presentation — references included.
Days 20–30	**Set C** (Promises and Power), one verse per day, with one full review day after every five. Day 30: recite all three palaces — roughly 26 verses — from memory, aloud, to another person.

After day 30, the pattern for life: new verses at a sustainable pace, review time growing as your holdings grow (Rule 6), a new palace for each new body of Scripture (Rule 5), and the app guarding everything you have already won. From there, the next mountain is a full chapter — Psalm 23, then Psalm 1, then a book, the way White's students climbed into Genesis.

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Scripture quotations are from the King James Version (public domain) and were verified word-for-word against the KJV text prior to publication. Ron White’s techniques and quotations are drawn from his own published articles and recorded interviews cited above; this paper is an independent study aid and is not affiliated with or endorsed by Ron White Training.