

Twelve Rules for the Use of Scripture

1. Know your intended market. You need to know what translation they prefer, the method they use for referencing Scripture, and how much Scripture they normally include in their articles.
2. Use printed Scripture sparingly. Unfortunately if you use more than several quotes, you eliminate about 90% of your markets. Also avoid long quotations. Quote only that part of a verse that is necessary. When most readers come to a long quotation, they skip or skim over it. If your quote will run more than 3-4 lines, it's best to put it in your own words with a note in parenthesis (see Rom. 11).
3. Be very careful not to proof-text or take Scripture out of context. "Know what his Word says and means" (2 Tim. 2:15 TLB). Be a workman who "correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15 NIV).
4. Quote accurately—never from memory. Be especially careful with punctuation. Do not follow capitalization in Scripture that is in poetic form unless you type it in poetic form in your manuscript. Do not change capitalization of pronouns referring to God. Leave it as it is in the version you are quoting from unless you are writing a book and note change on credits page. (Most publishers prefer using lower case for pronouns referring to God.)
5. Reference properly. Although the style varies some among the different houses, the most accepted practice is to include the reference in parenthesis after the printed Scripture followed by your period (see example in #3). Very few magazines put the reference in a footnote. Generally titles of books of the Bible are abbreviated in references in parenthesis but written out in text. Use semi-colons to separate multiple references (Gen. 2:16; Jer. 29:11), commas or hyphens to separate verses (Rom. 8:31-32, 34-39), and a dash or two hyphens for a block of Scripture between chapters (Rom. 9:30—10:4). Use Arabic not Roman numerals for multiple books (1 Chron. 28:20 not I Chron. 28:20).
6. Choose your translation or paraphrase carefully. Be aware of the preferences (or requirements) of your intended market. Don't be hesitant to use other than your favorite version. Look up your reference in several Bibles and choose the one that will be clearest to your readers.
7. ALWAYS identify the translation or paraphrase you are using. In most cases you will use an abbreviation (see the example in #3).
8. If you quote only from one translation/paraphrase, at the end of your manuscript say: "All Scripture is from the _____."
9. Normally your quotation is introduced with a comma unless it flows into your sentence. Examples: I recalled the familiar words, "For God so loved the world" (Jn. 3:16 TLB). I can experience "the power of the life-giving Spirit" (Rom. 8:20 TLB).
10. When the Scripture you are using is already in quotation marks, use double quotes. Example: "I am the true Vine" (Jn. 15:1 TLB) unless your quotation is more than eight lines and is set off from the text in a block quotation.
11. Use ellipses (3 periods) for anything you leave out in the middle of a quote. House rules may vary, but in most cases you do not need to use ellipses if you omit the beginning or end of a Scripture verse. Use brackets around any of your own words that you include in a quotation.
12. Endeavor to follow the advice *Discipleship Journal* gives their writers: "Encourage personal application of Scripture."