

## 15 Hints on Using Scripture in Your Writing

1. *Give the version of the Bible you are using.* If you quote Scripture in an article or book, the version is shown in parentheses after the reference, i.e., “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1 KJV). Note that no punctuation is used between the reference and the version, which is abbreviated and typed in small caps.

If you’re writing a book and using only one version of the Bible, the following statement may be shown on the copyright page: “Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in this book are taken from the...,” then give version and credit line, i.e., “New King James Version, Copyright © 1997 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.” If you are using more than one version, double space and continue to list the others, i.e., “Verses marked NIV are taken from the New International Version,” then include the credit line, and on down the list. Each publisher allows a certain number of verses to be quoted before permission is required (see pages 273ff); however, a credit line still is needed.

2. *Place the reference after the Scripture verse.* Sometimes you see the reference *before* the quotation, as in, “We see in Genesis 1:1 that ‘in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,’” but this may break the train of thought for your reader. It’s more common to say, “We read that ‘in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth’” (Genesis 1:1). Some authors put the reference in a footnote or endnote, directing the reader to the bottom of the page or the end of the chapter or book. However, this creates a lot of switching back and forth for the readers and some may not do it.
3. *Spell out the name of the book of the Bible in your reference to avoid confusion.* Phil. could stand for Philippians or Philemon. The publisher will abbreviate these books according to their style guide.
4. *Spell out numbers at the beginning of a sentence.* If you’re saying, “1 Thessalonians 1:1 says...,” spell the number 1, i.e., “First Thessalonians 1:1 says...”
5. *Be consistent in using numbers or Roman numerals.* Don’t use a Roman numeral in one place (i.e., II Timothy) and a number in another (i.e., 2 Timothy). Numbers seem to be more commonly used now than Roman numerals.
6. *If your citation includes two consecutive verses, be consistent in the use of punctuation.* Don’t use a comma one time and a hyphen the next; i.e., John 3:16-17 or John 3:16,17. Either is correct, but be consistent. Use a hyphen when citing three or more consecutive verses, i.e., John 3:16-18. If you’re quoting from the same book but different chapters, use a semicolon, i.e., John 3:16; 4:15. If you’re referring the reader to a passage consisting of two consecutive chapters, use an en dash, i.e., John 3–4. (Note: In Word, an en dash is made by clicking on Ctrl, and then the minus key on the number pad.)
7. *Type Scripture quotations in the same typeface as the rest of your manuscript.* Typing passages in bold is like shouting at your reader, and placing them in italics takes away from the smoothness of your writing and breaks the reader’s train of thought. Some

- publishers place Scripture quotations in a smaller font, but let that be *their* decision.
8. *To stress certain words in the Scripture passage, place them in italics, then show this fact after the reference; i.e., “In the beginning God *created the heaven and the earth*” (Genesis 1:1 KJV, emphasis added).* If you do this consistently throughout the manuscript, place a note to this effect on the copyright page as follows: Italics in Scriptures have been added by the author.
  9. *If you insert commentary within the Scripture, enclose it in brackets, i.e., “For God so loved the world [and this means you], that he gave his only begotten Son...” (John 3:16 KJV).*
  10. *Place closing punctuation after the ending parenthesis, i.e., rather than “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1), type “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).* (Note: Some publishers place the closing punctuation before the reference in a lengthy, indented quotation. Use their style guide and be consistent.)
  11. *Place passages four lines or less in quotation marks within the paragraph, but if the quotation is over four lines, begin a new paragraph and indent on one or both sides.* In this format, you will not need opening or closing quotation marks. Double space these quotations to allow the editor room for necessary corrections—for example, if they want to use a different version.
  12. *Citing long quotations.* Citing a long passage of Scripture may be done in several ways. 1) As one long indented paragraph, leaving out individual verse numbers; 2) as a long indented paragraph, including verse number in parentheses before the verse; or, 3) instead of using paragraph format, type each verse separately, with or without the verse number before it. Again, be consistent.
  13. *Copy Scripture exactly, word for word, comma for comma, period for period.* Be especially careful in the use of capitalization as some versions do not capitalize pronouns for God or Christ as “he,” “him,” “his,” “himself,” “me,” “my,” etc., while other versions do. Go according to the version you are using, even if it isn’t your personal preference. Especially be careful of the word “Lord” as the Old Testament often spells it with an initial cap and small caps, i.e., “Lord” which means “Jehovah,” while “Lord” is “Adonai,” which can refer to either God or a human leader. Always use it as it is found in the Scriptures.
  14. *Do not overuse Scripture.* In writing for the religious market, you may think that the more Scripture you use, the better; however, this can turn off and distract your reader; it also lets the Bible do your writing for you and doesn’t show the editor much of your own writing style.
  15. *Most importantly, follow the style guide of the publisher to whom you are submitting your manuscript.* Do your homework. Send for authors’ guidelines and/or check books that this particular company has published.