

# On memory and faith

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[ 0 : 00 ] I thought it would be good to talk about memories today.! Then we might be able to use those experiences fruitfully in our lives and the things that happen to us in the future.

A while ago, a friend of mine who's an art student up at Chelsea College in London gave me this book, Rachel White Reads Art. We'd been going through the Tate Modern together and I'd gotten stuck at looking at her artwork and as we left she said, let me give you an early Christmas gift. And I'd like to share with you some of her art to help stimulate your thoughts on the role of memory, the significant role that memory plays in our lives, especially with regards to what we believe. White Reads Art intrigues me because she makes molds or casts out of objects that have lived through a lot of human use. She casts the negative spaces, as it were, around or beneath these objects, which then become the positive form of her sculptures.

White Reads does this to emphasize the past, the history of the objects for us. And in a way, I think her art can be an illustration for us of who we are as human beings.

[ 1 : 56 ] As we live today and anticipate the future, we carry along with us the molds of our past. We carry along with us our memories. The first photo I'd like to show you is the sculpture of Upstairs.

It evokes a strong sense of physical upward movement, I find, of many people in the past history having climbed those stairs. This large artwork can be found in the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh.

The work somehow inverts a person's sense of space. It feels like it turns the world inside out, just revealing the memories, ignoring the present as well as the future, only thinking about the past. And ironically, it feels as if the stairs are going nowhere. So you don't get a sense of future, because the stairs are just going to a block.

On Monday I was giving this lecture, and one of the students said to me, are you sure it's not supposed to go that way? It really inverts a sense of space. There's another one that I want to share with you, and I find it actually more intriguing.

[ 3 : 17 ] This one is the mold of a door. And I'm drawn to this even more, because for me, it emphasizes that our past residue, our memories, can be the door to our next step in life, if we can only find the key to unlock the many memories we carry along with us.

Notice how this keyhole is the focus of the sculpture, of the big one as well. You're drawn to the keyhole. I hope that these two pictures have hinted a bit at the questions I want to deal with today. Let's wait for those who are coming. Come on in. Welcome. You were here last time, two years ago. Hello. I was just showing the others, two pieces of artwork that help stimulate my thoughts on memory.

This first one is called Upstairs. It's done by Rachel White-Reed. And her work is actually a cast of the mold of the negative spaces of things, which then become the positive space for her sculpture. This one is upstairs. And it seems like it only emphasizes the present and... I mean, it ignores the present and the future and only emphasizes the past, because it looks like the stairway is going nowhere.

[ 4 : 56 ] Another one we looked at was The Door. I like this one even better, because it almost focuses on the keyhole. Looking at how...

If we can only find the key to unlock our past memories, then we can move on in life. That's going to be sideways, though.

That's the keyhole, isn't it? Mm-hmm. Yeah. She turned that out. Her artwork does give a sense of invertedness. Does it need to be that way, do you think?

Yeah. No. It's just the keyhole, isn't it? Yeah, but the keyhole would be lengthwise, wouldn't it? Yeah? Do you think it goes that way?

That's why I think... Either way, it gives a picture of... Can I just ask, you know when you said about... Yeah? Negative and positive.

[ 5 : 51 ] Yeah. I mean, we're really into modern art. Yeah. Uh-huh. Can you explain? Well, all I meant by it was that it... She uses the mold of something to express that which is not positively there, but just the background of it, the backdrop, the memory, the residue, as it were, of the object.

How does she find that to positivity? Because what she does, then, is use that residue as her artwork instead of the thing itself. So people are drawn to it, thus that being more positive than negative.

Well, no. The only thing is... The only reason why I used the word positive is in the sense of... She uses that residue as the only object to reveal to us.

So she's revealing the leftover-ness, the residue of the staircase, instead of the staircase itself. Oh, yes. So... Is it like the negative in the film?

Yes. The negative side of the... Of the picture. Yeah, exactly. The picture itself. Yes. So, in looking at these pictures, I hope to have hinted at the questions I'd like to be looking at today.

[ 7 : 21 ] And the first question I'd like to be looking at is the relationship between memory and faith. I'd like to look at what should we do with our memories? What role should our memories play in our lives?

And secondly, I'd like to look at how can we allow our memories to influence our lives positively in the future? In answering these questions, hopefully, we'll be able to see how processed memories help us looking ahead to learn how to trust, to have faith as we walk on.

So firstly, what should we do with our memories? Let's start answering this question by taking a look at some of the collective memories that we share in Europe.

One of the memories which has had a significant impact on the history of our society today is that which happened more than 60 years ago, the Holocaust. And in looking at the various reactions of survivors from that immeasurable tragedy, such as Ellie Weasel, Hannah Arendt, and Corrie ten Boom, I hope to get a better grasp of understanding what the role of our memories should be.

And if we think of different news reports over the past year, this question of what we should do with our memories is actually rather important for us British people as well.

[ 8 : 50 ] Welcome. The very problem that bothered the British people concerning Prince Harry wearing a swastika armband to a dresser party, I think it was about a year ago now, and his brother Prince William looking on without being perturbed, is that their behavior was an indication of a lack of understanding of the historical sense, a loss of the nation's memories.

And if even the members of the royal family have a lack of understanding of the evil that was experienced in their own nation's history in World War II, people live in fear that history's evil will repeat itself.

In reading Ellie Weasel's personal account of what took place at Auschwitz, you get a sense that this is one of his strongest concerns as well. In his book, *From the Kingdom of Memory*, Ellie Weasel writes, I'll read it, I've tried to keep memory alive.

I've tried to fight those who would forget. Because if we forget, we're guilty. We're accomplices, he says. The memory of evil will serve as a shield against evil.

That the memory of death will serve as a shield against death. This I must believe. It's a kind of existential belief. I must believe it in order to go on. Hope can be given to me only by another human being.

[ 10 : 14 ] Mankind must remember that peace is not God's gift to his creatures. Peace is a very special gift. It's our gift to each other, he says. We remember Auschwitz and all that it symbolizes because we believe that in spite of the past and its horrors, the world is worthy of salvation and salvation, like redemption, can be found only in memory.

So he feels we need to keep memory alive to such an extent that our memory becomes our salvation. It's a type of existential thing.

What is existentialism? Existentialism is to believe in the importance of my existence beyond anything else. So my existence precedes anything I do.

Precedes my essence in a way, my nature. So for him, memory is the thing that saves us. In expressing the memories of his life before the Holocaust, Elie Weasel is trying to accentuate the

fact that what happened in history has had a huge impact.

And knowing this fact should influence our actions and hopefully prevent them from happening again. Our memories, he feels, Elie Weasel feels, should prevent evil from happening again.

[ 11 : 37 ] However, the memory is so all-encompassing for him that he finds it's a reason to exist. Elie Weasel's memories are imprisoning to him. So much so that he gives them supernatural qualities.

He claims that his memories are the peace that we give as a gift to each other. He claims that the role of memory is the only hope we have.

Let's have a look at another Holocaust survivor, Hannah Arendt, who's another Jewish philosopher, who emphasizes that the past has the right to be remembered to our historic description of it.

Because if we don't tell it, who's going to judge it? In her book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, which is kind of like a novel, but it's a historic account of the report on the trial of the German Nazi leader Adolf Eichmann, Hannah Arendt, this Jewish philosopher, emphasizes the overwhelming majority of victims who are dead.

But we need to construct what's happened for others. And in telling our story, it's inevitable that you include your observation in your narrative.

[ 13 : 03 ] History is about what type of story you tell as a spectator. So you select the facts. For there are no actors anymore, or any witnesses. She says, was it not logical to bring before the court all the facts of Jewish suffering, and then look for evidence, which in one way or another would connect Eichmann with what happened?

In this respect, the deliberate attempt at the trial to tell only the Jewish side of the story distorted the truth, even the Jewish truth. So she thinks it's important to select the facts that really give us evidence for what happened.

Our memories, our story of what happened, become judgment for Hannah Arendt. But it's only those who can remember what happened who can judge it.

And so it's important that we tell what we remember, she claims. And she even goes so far as to say, if we don't remember to tell what happened in history, history might repeat itself.

If we don't want history to repeat itself, don't we need people who are willing to judge what happened? Now the question I have for both Elie Weasel and Hannah Arendt, is whether memory is sufficient to prevent history from repeating itself.

[ 14 : 24 ] Is memory sufficient to prevent evil from happening? Elie Weasel and Hannah Arendt, I'm afraid, might risk getting stuck in history, so much so that it almost becomes too important for them.

It would appear as if memory had become so all-encompassing for them, so important for them, that it's more important to look back than to look forward. Now it may be understandable why what happened in the Holocaust would be central to the Jewish worldview, but I hope some of us also know Jews who were able to look beyond it and to look forward.

Another question which comes to my mind if I think about Elie Weasel and Hannah Arendt is whether the story of my memory is big enough to stand in judgment of all the stories of life.

Does my picture album of memories lead me up the stairs to nowhere, as in that picture, or does it lead me to finding the key to unlock the door to the biggest stories of life?

In an attempt to answer these questions, I'd like to refer to another survivor of the Holocaust, a survivor of the imprisonment of the Nazi concentration camps, and that's Corrie ten Boom, the one who initially triggered my ideas for this lecture.

[ 15 : 59 ] In her book, *The Hiding Place*, Corrie ten Boom, a Dutch woman, tells of the story, the secrets of the ten Boom family, trying to provide shelter for the persecuted Jews in Holland during the Second World War.

And these secrets sadly brought her family to the horrendous Holocaust experience. In the sequel to the book of *The Hiding Place*, in the beginning of her book, the sequel called *In My Father's House*, Corrie ten Boom describes how the Lord allowed things to happen to her in the first half of her life.

which prepared her for the story of the hiding place. She writes at the beginning of the book, Today, I know that memories are the key not to the past, but to the future.

I know that the experiences of our lives, when we let God use them, become the mysterious and perfect preparation for the work He will give us to do.

Isn't it amazing that someone who had happened, what happened to her, the story of suffering, which outdoes many stories of suffering, can still say that our difficult memories shouldn't hold us captive, but should be the window to the abundant promises that God gives us.

[ 17 : 23 ] But still, the pressing question is, how can we allow our memories to influence our lives positively? How can our difficult memories become the key which unlocks the door to our future?

Memories, those imaginary chains which link me to my past, whether that past stirs up pleasant or painful memories, recollections.

But even though those memories may not be happy ones, memories do help us to have a sense of belonging to those around us who share our past. This is why the phrase, do you remember when? is such a catchy one. And can be so powerful. Not only having memories, but having shared memories, whether they're good or bad, is the key to enjoying friendship or fellowship with others around us.

I've often reminisced with my own siblings, and I'm one of six, about the feelings that are evoked in us when we listen to Mozart's Horn Concerto. If I hear that music, I immediately start to feel sad and despondent.

[ 18 : 42 ] without initially realizing why. And I recently spoke to my sister, who told me that she smells the smell of musty horse blanket when she hears that music, along with the smell of my parents' old Peugeot.

Why? We're reminded of being brought to boarding school in the old Peugeot, with a horse blanket over our knees to keep us warm. We were on the way from Richmond, a small village in the foothills of the Drakensberg Mountains, to the city Peter Mertzberg in South Africa.

And my mother used to play Mozart's Horn Concerto in the car on the way, hoping to invigorate us as we were leaving home for school for the week. Sadly, the feeling that's evoked in me is not invigoration.

It's that of the opposite. I think this story tells a bit of a tale of the fact that I didn't exactly relish the idea of boarding school. But it's a story that clearly ties me very strongly to all my other five siblings. Memories are linked to our stories. And our stories make up who we are. And we each have our own unique package of stories that are ours, that make up who we are.

[ 19 : 57 ] Personally, being in the midst of many cultures as a mission kid, I often feel like I'm a double agent in the sense that I live multiple lives which are all a bit disconnected.

What I've often found most difficult because of this this feeling that I'm not able to share many stories with others. And if I try to tell them some of my stories, people have no frame of reference to put them in.

And so they just stare blankly at me, which I find worse than not having tried to tell the story. At such a time in my vulnerability, it feels like my memories are being warped.

But I've got to remember that even so, my memories remain a part of me. And if I don't keep on trying to share them, I'm lonelier because of it.

And thinking about memory in this way, it reminds me of the film which was shown a while back called *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. Has anybody ever seen that? The film does a good job of portraying the fact that we're actually lonely without our memories, whether they're pleasant ones or painful ones.

[ 21 : 16 ] And in all our painful memories, there are actually also beautiful moments. And without those beautiful moments, our lives are empty. In this film, the main character has a memory erasement treatment done in an attempt to live a life free of those painful memories.

And once they've done this, they realize that they've erased both painful and pleasant memories which leave them feeling lonely. Without memories, we can feel rather lost.

Although I thought it was a thought-provoking film with regards to memory, I feel like it doesn't go far enough. Because if the only memories we have have no frame of truth, there's no way to measure whether they're good or bad memories, nor any satisfactory way to process them, really. And so they only leave us with a hollow feeling. We learn from our experiences through our memories. And without our past stories, we make the same mistakes over and over again.

as Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 10 verse 6, he says, now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.

[ 22 : 38 ] too many of us are wrapped up in our own stories, which we possessively call my life, and in which we lose perspective because of that.

we get stuck in the particular details of the past, and we struggle to be present in the now, to see further. We all have stories of heartache, stories of loneliness, and betrayal, some more extreme than others, but we all have them.

And yet, amidst all those stories, we also all at least have one story of redemption, a beautiful moment that is full of surprises and delight.

It may be just a fleeting memory, a glimmer of truth, a morsel of redemption, but each of us have at least had someone who gave us an affirming smile somewhere, or somebody who affirmed who you are.

Still, even so, we tend to cling on to those darker memories, and allow our thoughts to linger on those more quickly, rather than looking to see what adventure next week might hold, or next month.

[ 24 : 10 ] Why is that? Why do we linger on those darker memories? Our memories give us a sense of control of our past, and the future is a vague unknown.

While we at least can say something of our past, we might not fully be able to understand it, but we can say something of the past. However, for most of us, the meaning of our lives will not be found until we risk moving out of our supposed realm of memories to looking at the future.

And so, as we consider what we should do with our memories, and how important they are, as well as how we can allow them to help us, we also have to see that they are part of a much greater whole, future.

Amidst the itty-bitty story of our lives, in which we often lose perspective, we have to recognize that there is a bigger picture. Every good meal, every moment or hug, or perfect cup of coffee, still deep down, leaves us with a sense of longing, a sense of being dissatisfied.

We're left with a sense of anticipating something, not a path that ends in arrival. Dan Allender in his book *The Healing Path*, looks at what we should do with our past memories on our journey to try to make sense of life.

[ 25 : 36 ] He says, healing in this life is not the resolution of our past, it's the use of our past to draw us into deeper relationship with God and his purposes for our lives.

We need a new understanding of how to deal with past hurts, one that acknowledges the past damage to the human spirit while charting, creating a path toward the abundant life God promises.

That's what Dan Allender says. We must consider the huge story we're called to know, to dream about, to soak in. And it's important to bring our individual story to that big story, to the bigger picture, and not to disconnect ourselves from it.

One story can change our lives. One story remembered can resurrect our future. Aren't we all somewhere along the line, tempted to ask the question, is God really telling a good story?

And is my life one of his great stories? It doesn't help a whole lot to know the big story without finding our own story in it.

[ 26 : 55 ] Any suffering, and we've all suffered, changes the human heart, sometimes for the good, and sometimes for the bad. People who've experienced the horror of suffering abuse seem to know more deeply than others that life is unfair, that heartache is certain, that tragedy is normal, and change is an inch by inch process, a battle that is surprising and humbling.

Yet Dan Allender is a counselor who has worked with a lot of sexually abused people, says that he's amazed by many who have suffered profoundly, yet sing both the deeper strains of sorrow and the most haunting melodies of hope.

God's love. We're all faced with the challenge of learning to face up to our sorrow. This is what will give us hope. And if we're to become more of who God wants us to be, we must consider what it means to live in a broken world rather than trying to scramble up means to run away from evil.

In order to get a clearer picture of what I mean here, let's take a look at a biblical story of Joseph with his many-colored coat, which can be found in Genesis chapter 3, 70, chapter 50.

Joseph was the 11th son of Jacob, of Jacob's 12 sons. He was number 11. Joseph was born to Jacob's wife, Rachel, who had been barren for many, many years and had waited many painful and jealous years watching her sister Leah give birth to many sons to Jacob.

[ 28 : 42 ] Now, no families are exempt from problems and this one wasn't either. Sibling rivalry was high on the list of problems in this family and it had already been in the previous generation between Jacob and Esau as well.

And so we see that history repeats itself as Joseph quickly becomes the favorite of his father. He was treated with more affection than the rest of the children which probably fostered a lot of hate

and jealousy.

Joseph was a goad to his brothers, an ever-pressing irritation. He must have been something like 13 years younger than the oldest brother or 15 years younger and he seemed to know it all as he told them his dreams.

And the fact that his father singled him out and gave him a many multicolored coat couldn't have helped the situation any. Joseph was probably most likely an arrogant lad and ended up paying the price dearly for it.

His resentful brothers who all felt a bit like second-class citizens in the family doubtless felt it was best to just get rid of this rotten apple who was the cause of the difficulty in their lives.

[ 30 : 00 ] And so tragically they sold Joseph for a pittance as a slave to an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh's officials. Joseph probably questioned the faith in God that his father had told him when he found himself sold as a slave.

He promptly wondered what was it all about. But as we know the story doesn't stop here it goes on. It goes on with Joseph being drawn closer to God as he processed his suffering.

The Lord blessed everything that Joseph did after that. He worked his way up to being in charge of the whole land of Egypt through wisely interpreting Pharaoh's dreams.

And so Joseph becomes the one appointed to rule over all the people and guide them in the process of saving up enough produce and grain from the land of the seven years of famine that was to come.

It was therefore Joseph himself who amazingly received the sons of Jacob who came begging for food. His brothers who had betrayed him all those years before. The stark reality of how closely linked betrayal is to our memories was probably very real for Joseph at that time.

[ 31 : 24 ] And as we consider what we should do with our memories and how we can influence our memories, allow our memories to influence us positively, we need to recognize that our memories usually serve to navigate a lot of what we do in our daily activities without even really being aware of it.

And yet the moment we're struck by tragedy or disaster or betrayal, we start searching for a guiding map to somehow circumvent or get around the problems we experience.

We start to retrace all the events that happen from that moment, seeking a frame of reference, trying to make sense of what happened, trying to understand the situation we find ourselves in and how we've arrived there.

And so I can picture that Joseph might have used all those many, many hours he had to while away constructively, probably was about 13 years of it as a slave and in prison, remembering and thinking about how he'd landed in this tragic predicament.

I could picture that the questions that came to his mind sitting there in prison were something like, how much responsibility in it did Jacob, his father, actually have in loving him more than the rest of the children?

[ 32 : 44 ] And did this unwisely arouse arrogance on Joseph's part? And what impact did rejection, impact of rejection, did Jacob as well as Joseph perpetuating his father's partiality, have on Joseph's brothers, because of the way they were treated.

And so when Joseph was confronted with his brothers arriving all those many years later, he stood before a choice. He could choose to avoid confrontation, upon which there would have been no restoration between him and his brothers, and no reparation.

But would Joseph have been any happier because of it? Or, Joseph could choose to get his brothers to realize their own shared past.

And Joseph takes the risk in the way in which he deals with his brothers. He gets them to understand the past they share, at the cost of perhaps never seeing his father again, who he dearly loved.

he chooses to process the stinging memories he has with his brothers. And to be able to make this choice, Joseph has to process his own shame at having dealt with his brothers so arrogantly all those years before.

[ 34 : 13 ] to have the courage to face his brothers as their true brother, he had to forgive them. He had to be willing to go through the whole confrontation with them before he could reveal himself to them.

He felt to process it with them, he needed to test them. And so he asked for Benjamin, his younger brother, to come and join them. And only then was he ready to reveal his real emotions to his brothers.

Only then does he start to weep. A counselor who studied with me theology at Covenant Seminary in the States, Petra Bloom, wrote an article in Covenant recently, saying that in her experiences of counseling today, people need to learn to unpack their heart with words.

And another way of saying this could be something like to process our memories, we need to use emotive words, words with emotions. Something of this was slowly happening for Joseph, I think. And even though Joseph took this great risk of confronting his brothers, the Lord blessed him and allowed him time to see his father. Instead of allowing his past, his despairing memories to imprison him, Joseph comes to the point of being able to reassure his brothers that he has forgiven them.

[ 35 : 44 ] Let's read that in Genesis 50, verse 15 to 21. When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, what if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?

So they sent word to Joseph saying, your brother left these instructions before he died. This is what you're to say to Joseph. I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.

Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father. When their message came to him, Joseph wept. His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him.

Were you slaves? They said. But Joseph said to them, don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

So then don't be afraid. I'll provide for you and your children. And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them. Humanly speaking, Joseph had no need to be kind to his brothers.

[ 36 : 58 ] Instead, he should have probably taken revenge, humanly speaking. And yet, he rose above his own past pain and managed to see the bigger picture, the big story, in which his story actually played a significant part.

Joseph's brothers felt shame because they felt stripped of control over the situation. Yet hope and faith don't focus on our own circumstances, which clinging on to our memories does.

but they focused on Christ's coming and the redemption of our character. And this is what we see Joseph particularly managing to do in Genesis 45 when he said, do not be distressed, God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. hope, I think, grows according to the extent in which we lean into and take the risk of the present for the sake of the future.

The risk of faith is seeing what cannot be seen. It's seeing the future from the redemption of the past and setting out then towards what God has called us to do and who he has called us to become.

[ 38 : 25 ] Our stories fit in the big story of creation fall and redemption. Our stories include our own failure, knowing salvation from working through our brokenness, our difficult times and our frustrations about us all.

This is where faith, I think, is linked with memories. It's important to bring our unique stories to the big picture. We need to fit our memories into the true reality of fall, Christ's coming, redemption, and Christ's second coming.

And if we can place them in the big picture, in the big framework, a big part of it will start to make sense. And it made enough sense for Joseph to share what he believed with his brothers.

Dan Helender helpfully reminds us that you are the only you this world will know. And something about your life is meant to make something about God known in a way that no one else can do.

To serve God is to bring our story to him and allow our life's themes to make God's story known to others. God's love. The content of our faith has to do with his story, with history, a corporate history as well as a personal history.

[ 39 : 53 ] I believe in a God with whom I have a personal relationship, historically bound, and this is where my memory plays a role. This relationship is expressed in prayer and communication, but also in the comfort I get from being able to be dependent on God and being able to rely on him.

This relationship is expressed in my being able to bring my memories to the point that they remind me of God's faithfulness, and to the point of being reminded of his constancy.

Just as the Israelites also had to remember the Lord's faithfulness to them in order to be able to go on, and in order to believe that God is true to his word.

In working through our memories, we can be led to help other people who have similar struggles and be able to share with them how God helped us through our struggles.

We can develop a calling through seeing how our past experiences give us the tools to fulfill it. We can emphasize better, empathize better with those who have similar stories, and we can gauge where we're at in life through our own heart change with regards to the memories we have of how we've dealt with things in the past, and we can feel free enough to embrace the mysteries and adventures that lie ahead of us instead of carrying around with us the noose around our necks of memories that won't let us go.

[ 41 : 33 ] we can experience a rest when we're resting in God's work, and only then do we really understand his grace. I'd like to stop there, because I'd like to leave some time for questions, or comments, or shared memories.

about having a coffee, and not being satisfied. Did I get that right? Yeah, no, right, in the sense that there's more to life than just pain, the experiences, the small things, even though we can really cherish a warm cup of coffee after a cold day, there's more to life somehow.

We're left with a sense of anticipation of what's going to happen now. I'd like to ask what you meant earlier when you talked about light and dark memories, and good and evil memories, and what you mean by dark memories.

These are memories that are negative, or memories that, I don't know, when you remember them because you go onto a downward spiral, or maybe self-obsession, things.

Hmm. I think you're right. What I meant by it was a sense of getting overly self-absorbed.

[ 43 : 07 ] Yeah. Yeah, and clinging on to those things which have been hard in life, and having those be more in the forefront of our minds, instead of also the pleasant things, or the things that might give hope.

But we can only really do that, I believe, if we work through the painful memories, not just keeping on remembering them without doing anything about them, but if we can name them and work through them, we can be able to share them with others in a useful way, hopefully.

Being able to empathize with others who've experienced a similar thing, and share together how one can view it with a different perspective somehow, like Joseph did, in a way.

Being able to share with his brothers how it was to be in the family together. Yes, they have different perspectives, and yet they came from the same family, so they shared something.

Yes, especially what he was in denial of any of the things that happened in the past, and I really used that against his brothers in terms of relationship. No, I think also they both experienced rejection.

[ 44 : 32 ] He experienced rejection from them, and they experienced rejection from him and from the father, and so they could both talk about rejection. Yes. But he could have had the choice to just leave that memory to be a sense of woe is me, you know, how terrible my life has been, I've been rejected by my family.

But instead he chose to acknowledge his shame involved in the whole scene, and work through it and forgive his brothers. and forgive them.

Could he have a sense of even if he was in written to the country of blessing his efforts? Because he has experienced that grace, he has found that grace.

Yeah, I don't think that... It was their second trip that he told them, and that he was their brother. That's true.

perhaps he was thinking about that. Yeah, and also, I don't think that we can do all of this on our own strings. I think God was probably working on him on the first visit.

[ 45 : 47 ] Are you going to have the courage? This may sound like a little dumb question. There are never dumb questions, I believe. Although, like, someone who's got an union, just kind of like how, like, there's an enduring self, do you know what I mean?

How does it work? You've got to like, say, like, an enduring self. Yeah. Or you might have, or like, we could just be with collections, memories, you know, and we only exist in this kind of, you know, instant, like, there is the present, and I kind of lose all of our memories.

We know my birth. We don't know what I anymore, do you know what I mean? And I have, how would you look at that from a Christian?

What is that I'm losing? That's what I wanted to know, is you lose all of your memory. Do you know what I mean? Well, from the moment now, you believe in the Bible, and then there you know it and then you don't realize that you did anything right.

Do you know what I mean? It's a very hypothetical situation, maybe. I don't know, I just thought that. Yeah. Yeah.

[ 47 : 17 ] And yet we still have the count of other people who can describe history for us. You still would have the Bible to look back on. And you could...

I think we're more than just playing our memories. That's what I was trying to do know.

Yeah. I want to... I would like to challenge such a person who claimed that they were only a collection of memories to ask them what happens tomorrow.

While you were talking I was thinking of people who believe in ancestor worship because I grew up amongst the Zulus who believe in ancestor worship and they tend to celebrate or have funerals be more important than weddings because they look back to their forefathers to tell them how they should live their life.

So looking back is more important than looking forward. And yet it's a very restricting and fearful life to live to not know when your forefathers are going to tell you to plant your corn.

[ 48 : 45 ] So often they plant their corn too late and end up hungry for the year because the forefathers didn't tell them when to plant their corn. And it's a fearful life to live only stuck in your memories.

And as we were looking at Elie Wiesel in the beginning, he emphasizes memory as himself. The collective memories is more important. But they can be very restricting and I'd like to challenge as a person to look beyond that there's more to life than just being stuck in our stinging memories. memories. And that those memories can be used, actually. That something good, fruitful can come out of it.

Yes, what are you going to ask? Well, let's take Joseph's story as an example.

I find it unique how Joseph was actually the one who was helping his hungry brothers, who were then supposed to be the twelve tribes of Israel to continue.

[ 50 : 24 ] His small story of doing God's will became significant in saving the twelve tribes who were then actually, if one looks at history, the line of Christ.

Christ. And in our lives, now, many, many hundreds of years later, I do believe that we can contribute in God's work, in the small things we choose to do.

Yes, exactly. It's in our choices, in our moment by moment choices that we make, that we consider the value of them, and what is the right thing to be choosing to do.

And in those details, we can actually be a part of the much bigger picture, being a part of sharing with others, empathizing with others and sharing with them how we've worked through and dealing with the brokenness of life.

Because we all view the life of this world as something that's broken and a struggle because of that. And how to work through that and how to see hope within it.

[ 51 : 42 ] And how to see hope within it. So how do you view the Holocaust?

How do you view the Holocaust? How do you think people do? Because you're saying you thought this stuck in the past, but you've got to remember the stuff.

You know what I mean? Yeah. I don't think that... I guess like in Israel, we've got a whole thing about it. We call the museum and the memorial gates. You know, they're always like, don't forget.

It's true, but like... I've been to Auschwitz myself and I think it was important for me as living in Europe to have been able to go and see the horrendous tragedy.

tragedy. But I found it very meaningful when I read Corrie and Bohm's work to have a sense that somebody would experience such immense tragedy and yet be able to say that her earlier life prepared her for what was going to happen.

[ 53 : 07 ] And that because it happened, she could mean something else to others in the future. people who didn't experience the Holocaust. And I know some Jews who know the story, but are not stuck in only this account of the Holocaust, but can look further and see the bigger picture and live towards Christ's second coming.

Live towards knowing that one day there will be Jews. Exactly. But like, just for two days in general, it's had a big impact on that theology.

It's about the nature of God. So you can't get away. I don't believe that just plain remembering it will prevent it from happening again.

I think something more has to happen for evil to be prevented from happening again. It has been happening again. It's like the one. Yeah.

What do you think is an extra? extra? Just a lot of stuff coming. Because I have a sister who works in Angola at the moment helping refugees move back from Zambia into Angola after the 30-year civil war there.

[ 54 : 43 ] people. And I think she finds it amazing how these people tell her their story of how they left Angola in the war and how much horror and how many parts of their family have died.

And now they're back in Angola. They see it as part of it. She tries to help them see it as part of a bigger picture as in the sense of knowing that this brokenness is not something that will eternally be.

But that one day Christ will return. And that Christ did die on the cross as an atonement for the many, many things that we've done that have made a huge mess and have had such detriment effect on others.

Thank you. one experience of my younger life is when I had a great day and the chaos that is in the way there.

I think I'm allowing that to excuse me from moving on with developing my own life for many years.

[ 56 : 02 ] I almost felt I've got a good excuse. But when I consciously said that I didn't like that when that was happening. And so when that was going to change things, I didn't like that.

But if I'm a Christian, I think you can forgive me too. See that you shouldn't be tired by that. But if there's some good experiences come out of that, you can understand people better.

It's a very real thing. In a smaller way, these things, it's very personal.

It's very feeling from very solitating. But if you get that trapped away, forever, you can't be used to a person, but each one is useful and wants to develop what we should be.

Yeah. feel! feel! feel! feel! feel! feel! feel! feel! feel! feel! feel! feel! there, that I mean, that I'm a battle with him, so I blame him for the other states.

[ 57 : 22 ] But you're saying that your experiences have been, have been given to the other states by God, allowed by God to lead you to him.

Yes. And spread down the elements, in the kind of it seemed, as in Joseph's situation.

Yeah, because Joseph probably, initially was like, God, you know, my dad told me about God. But what a mess this is. I am now sold as a slave, and all my brothers rejected me.

I mean, he had the right to be very bitter. But what happened is, the story didn't stop there. The story continued, and it's an amazing story, of working through his shame.

You know, you didn't have to have, the idea of the big picture, in order to understand that, and the long history, he doesn't have that, because he has these, so I think that's a lot of difficult, and I have difficult issues, but they don't have the better narrative to be able to understand it.

[ 58 : 38 ] And that's why it's very important, that we share our stories. And that our story can be part of sharing our story with somebody else, so that we can get the bigger picture.

And it's good to find out about people's stories. Mm. Mm-hmm. And then we can relate, make connections with people.

Yeah. Which, in the sense, leads you on to the future. You know, we know we have a future, but do they have a future?

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Mm-hmm. We sometimes are the power of it. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. No, that's what I was saying as well. Sometimes we feel very disconnected from each other, and yet I think we're weaker if we don't share something of ourselves.

[ 59 : 36 ] Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. We're lonelier somehow, because we're all human.

There are overlaps somehow. It's just persevering and working out what they are instead of giving up.

Yeah. It's quite interesting in the Jewish picture, in the Jewish past, lots of people know their story, and it sometimes feels, I mean, I know that to be a terrible time, but in a sense, they have it easier now because the people in, perhaps in the Western world, who are very much little pockets of, of knowledge in themselves, and they don't get to connect, unless you do reach out to some, you know, their story and their story, and find connections.

Yeah, exactly. And so as everyone knows the Jewish history, everyone knows the, you know, if you're a big group of people, something that died has happened to you, they know their story. Mm-hmm. And it's funny. Mm-hmm. Yeah. Mm-hmm. I think our time is up. Is there anybody else who wants to stay and ask something?  
Someone kicks us off. Okay. Deep practice is off. All right. Yeah. People will do that. They move now. Mm-hmm. Yeah. Mm-hmm.  
[ 61 : 02 ] Mm-hmm. Okay. Thank you. Thank you.