

Do You Remember?

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[0 : 0 0] last week. There was an insert in the bulletin last week, and this time you got not one but two of these QR codes in your bulletin here. I want to emphasize that because that is coming up in less than two weeks, which means we're scrambling a bit to make it happen, but this is something that is very important. I'm going to be talking about an aspect of our Christian life in a moment in the sermon in which we sometimes think the Christian life is something you can drift into, and that's not true. And the truth is that unity among our churches is something that we don't drift into. It takes work. It takes work and effort. And so this is something that we as pastors are excited about, and we want to bring together a number of folks from three different churches in town. And so what we have here is an opportunity. First of all, we need you to register if you want to attend the event, and that's so that they can keep track of how many people are there so they can make plans for it. And the second, there is a code to volunteer for the event. And so one thing that I let Glenn know is that we want our people helping out. So there's a lot of needs in the areas of venue setup and decoration, activities, planning, a lot of games there, music team, food supplies and cooking team. If you've got chili that you can add to their chili cook-off, that would be awesome.

And then need for venue cleanup. So take a look. We'll have this, it should be in the email as well, the weekly email as well that was sent out. But we would love to see folks from our church jumping in, serving, helping with this. That's something that we want to really emphasize as we partner together in the gospel with other churches in our town that honor Jesus Christ as Lord. So let me pray for us as we prepare to hear God's word this morning, and then we'll continue with our worship.

Our God and our Father, I thank you that we can be here, that we can sit here and remember. And Lord, we recognize that remembering is difficult for us. And so I pray, would you give us eyes to see, ears to hear, hearts to understand, all that you have told us, all that you've already told us that moment by moment we tend to forget. Lord, I pray, guard me back, guard my lips from saying anything foolish. And may the words that I preach this morning be words that properly reflect your will, that honor you, and that draw us to marvel at who you are, at the wonder of your word. Amen. Okay, well, last week I preached a sermon on the question, does the Lord remember? And I made a big mistake when I preached that. And the big mistake I made is that I got the sermon started by asking what you do when you forget other people's names, what you do to remember other people's names. And that was a mistake because guess what happened after this sermon? I was approached afterward by a few very clever individuals who thought it'd be hilarious to test my memory. And to their amusement, I did not pass the test very well. So, Christine, I remember your name. Lita, I remember your name. Mamita. I'm going to give you a hard time. So that's a minor problem, of course. And now those are names I'm not going to forget. But this is a very serious problem in our Christian life when there are very important things that we don't remember, especially when we don't remember God, when we don't remember who God is, when we don't remember what God has done for us.

In your darkest nights of your soul, do you remember? Our failure to remember is not a new problem.

It's not a new problem that's brought on by busy lives, distracting screens. This is an age-old problem. Psalm 77 speaks about how hard it is to remember, how hard it is to hold fast and hold on to what's true about God.

[4 : 3 2] This is on page 488 in the blue Bibles that our ushers hand out. And so, Psalm 77, turn there, please. I want you to have these words in front of you before your eyes as I talk about them.

And I want you to follow along with me as I read the words of a man named Asaph, who, like many of us, struggled to remember. Psalm 77, to the choir master, according to Jeditham, a psalm of

Asaph.

I cry aloud to God, aloud to God, and he will hear me. In the day of my trouble, I seek the Lord. In the night, my hand is stretched out without wearying. My soul refuses to be comforted. When I remember God, I moan.

When I meditate, my spirit faints. You hold my eyelids open. I am so troubled that I cannot speak. [5 : 38] I consider the days of old, the years long ago. I said, let me remember my song in the night. Let me meditate in my heart.

Then my spirit made a diligent search. Will the Lord spurn forever and never again be favorable? Has his steadfast love forever ceased?

Are his promises at an end for all time? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he, in anger, shut up his compassion? Then I said, I will appeal to this, to the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the deeds of the Lord. Yes, I will remember your wonders of old. I will ponder all your work and meditate on your mighty deeds.

Your way, O God, is holy. What God is great like our God? You are the God who works wonders. You have made known your might among the peoples.

[6 : 47] You, with your arm, redeemed your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph. When the water saw you, O God, when the water saw you, they were afraid.

Indeed, the deep trembled. The clouds poured out water. The skies gave forth thunder. Your arrows flashed on every side. The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind. Your lightnings lighted up the world.

The earth trembled and shook. Your way was through the sea. Your path through the great waters. Yet your footprints were unseen.

You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron. This is the word of the Lord given to us by the Holy Spirit of God.

If you picked up nothing else from this psalm, you certainly picked up a deep emotional struggle. As it turns out, remembering is hard.

[7 : 53] Remembering is hard. We like to think that remembering comes easily and automatically to the Christian, but it doesn't. You do not just drift into remembering.

Remembering. What happens is you drift into forgetting. Remembering is what takes effort. You will need to continually swim against the current to remember what is true about God, about who he is, about what he has done for you.

It is like you are in a river that is flowing towards forgetting, and to remember takes effort. If Psalm 77, if the entire rest of the Bible is anything to go by, remembering is hard.

Why? Why is forgetting so easy? Why is remembering so hard? Here's three reasons why. Three reasons why. First, remembering is hard because sin hardens us.

Sin hardens us. When you sin, you betray the God who made you and the God who saved you. And what happens in our hearts when we betray God is that we need to justify ourselves.

[9 : 09] You need to justify yourself before God and others. You have to find something to hold on to, something to cling to, something to boast in and elevate yourself. And to do that, you have to close your mind off to guilt.

You have to find some way or other to justify what you have done. You intentionally forget the commands and the wisdom that God has given.

I felt this in my heart. It's like a brain block happens in your head. I have watched this happen in other people. It's actually quite a horrible thing to witness.

I've seen sin produce. It's almost like watching a rapid onset Alzheimer's that happens towards somebody. They become incapable of remembering even the most obvious commands and promises of God.

Sometimes commands and promises that have come out of their own mouth. And they seek to justify themselves. And another way that sin can harden you is if you live in fear of being found out.

[10 : 12] In fear of having your sin discovered by others, your sin condemned by them, but more importantly by God. You look at God, you look at other people with a darkened and suspicious gaze.

And your spiritual eyesight goes bad. You start seeing them as the problem, them as evil. Even God himself starts looking cruel to you. Charles Spurgeon, as he was reflecting on Psalm 77, he wrote this.

The justice, holiness, power, and truth of God have all a dark side. And indeed, all the attributes of God may be made to look black upon us if our eye be evil.

If we've got a bad eye. So one reason why remembering is hard is because sin hardens us. And second, remembering is hard because suffering blinds us.

Suffering blinds us. And I think that's what's going on in Psalm 77. Notice in verse 3, notice how the author writes, When I remember God, I moan.

[11 : 23] When I meditate, my spirit faints. So he is remembering. Asaph is remembering, sort of. He's meditating on thoughts of God, but they aren't good thoughts that are coming to his mind.

He is ruminating. He's obsessing. And he's got his eyes fixed on something that's true, but it isn't the whole truth. Suffering has a way of putting blinders on you.

They're like blinkers that you put on a racehorse. Suffering blinds you by restricting your vision. In your anxiety, in your distress, in your fear, the field of vision is narrowed.

It is limited. And you see true things, but you don't see the whole truth. Now, in a fight or flight situation, that's probably a good thing.

When you're out in the forest and you've got a bear charging at you, you don't want to be like, huh, I wonder what's going on all around me, you know. You need a focused mind that blocks out everything but the threat.

[12 : 31] When you put your hand on a hot stove, you want a focused mind on the threat. But in a time of prolonged suffering, a time of chronic suffering, when you get stuck in fight or flight mode for hours, days, weeks, months, years on end, now it's no longer helpful to have eyes that only fixate on what's bad.

Now it's no longer helpful to be blind to what's good and true and beautiful. But suffering makes it hard to see everything that is in your field of vision.

You no longer see all of who the Lord is, all of what he's done for you. So remembering is hard because sin hardens us.

Remembering is hard because suffering blinds us. And third, remembering is hard because shame deafens us. Shame deafens us.

When you carry shame around with you, shame that there is something disgusting or pathetic or unacceptable about you, then you become deaf to what is good and true and beautiful.

[13 : 46] It's like having a hearing aid in your ear. And that hearing aid of shame is tuned to the frequency of an accusing voice in your head, that voice of shame that is so convincing and so believable.

And it tunes out the good news. You no longer hear what the Lord has said to you. You no longer hear his words of honor, his words of comfort, his words of assurance.

They apply to everyone else but not to you. So remembering is hard because sin hardens us, suffering blinds us, shame deafens us.

And here is how Spurgeon summarized the state of the psalmist, the state of Asaph in Psalm 77. He says that the psalmist has begun to perceive the Lord in this way.

He says, Lord, Remembering brings misery at first.

[15 : 40] Note how at first, remembering the Lord was not a pleasant experience to the psalmist. It was actually quite painful. Consider verses 1 to 5. I cry aloud to God.

I cry aloud to God. I cry aloud to God. And he will hear me. In the day of my trouble, I seek the Lord. In the night, my hand is stretched out without wearying.

My soul refuses to be comforted. When I remember God, I moan. When I meditate, my spirit faints. You hold my eyelids open.

You hold my eyelids open. I am so troubled that I cannot speak. I consider the days of old, the years long ago. And so when you're mired in sin, suffering, and shame, when you stop to think of the Lord, what comes naturally to your mind at first is going to be painful.

This initial pain of remembering, remembering the Lord, of remembering how life used to be, of remembering how God is good to other people, it's something that all Christians experience in the course of their lives, that initial pain.

[16 : 49] Spurgeon himself says this, He is wretched indeed, whose memories of the ever-blessed prove distressing to him. Yet the best of men know the depth of this abyss.

The best of men know the depth of this abyss. For even the best of Christians, remembering is hard. So, because remembering is hard, you get stuck in forgetfulness.

You get stuck in forgetfulness. You get stuck there because, first of all, you're weak. You need help. Your mind is just, we're just not capable of holding on to all the truth that we need right now. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. And on top of our weakness, sometimes, sometimes you get stuck in forgetfulness because it is useful. It's useful to wallow in the self-pity and anger that is your right as a victim of suffering. It's useful to hold on to the shame of failed pride. You hate the misery that comes with these things, but you cherish the advantages all the same.

[18:05] Maybe it's useful to be stuck in forgetfulness. I want to tell you that the more that I counsel people, the more I realize every person I'm counseling is stuck in problems of sin, suffering, and shame.

And, of course, that means they are all stuck in forgetfulness, too. The sin, the suffering, the shame means that we've long forgotten what's true, what's good, what's beautiful.

And the more that I sit with folks like this, the more it feels like I'm looking in a mirror and I realize I keep getting stuck there, too. It clings to me, too, and it's a lot.

And I forget because I'm weak, and I forget because forgetting is useful to me. And I think we've all been there if we truly understand what's going on in our hearts.

I think we've all felt a bit like the Apostle Peter at times. There's that time when Jesus was walking on water on the Sea of Galilee. It's the middle of the night. There's a violent wind blowing across the sea.

[19:15] Matthew chapter 14, here's what we read, takes place. In the fourth watch of the night, he came to them walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified and said, It is a ghost!

And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, Take heart. It is I. Do not be afraid. And Peter answered him, Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.

He said, Come. So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus.

But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and began to sink. And beginning to sink, he cried out, Lord, save me! Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, Oh, you of little faith, why did you doubt?

As Peter was stepping across the turbulent water, This is not a calm lake.

[20:29] This is a windstorm. And as he ventured farther from the safety of the boat, his eyes, he let his eyes slip away from Jesus.

We read here that he saw the wind. And so he was afraid. The wind was real. The waves were real. His eyes saw the deadly peril that he was in. And Jesus was blinkered out of his sight. His ears heard the howling wind, and they were deaf to those words that he had spoken.

Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid. His heart remembered the wind and the waves, but it forgot the power of Jesus.

Oh, you of little faith, why did you doubt? Peter was doubting because he forgot. The only thing Peter had going for him in that moment of terror, he had an emergency 911 prayer.

[21:40] Lord, save me. Because even in Peter's forgetting, Jesus didn't forget him. Even when you get stuck in forgetfulness, the Lord still remembers you.

And then in turn, you begin to get unstuck as you remember the Lord. You begin to get unstuck as you remember the Lord.

At first, remembering brought misery to the psalmist. But Asaph persisted in remembering. He persisted until he had a breakthrough.

Psalm 77 hinges on verses 11 and 12. I will remember the deeds of the Lord. Yes, I will remember your wonders of old.

I will ponder all your work and meditate on your mighty deeds. There is a commitment here. I will remember.

[22:47] A defiant word. I will remember. And that commitment is obedience to a command of the Lord. He is obeying a command that God gives again and again throughout the Bible.

Remember. Remember. Remember. Over and over again, the Holy Spirit tells you, remember. It is no coincidence that everywhere else in Psalm 77, the author speaks of God.

He speaks of the Lord. But only here in this verse, in verse 11, does he use the covenant name of God. The word Lord in your Bibles is in small caps.

That's because that stands in for the name that is often translated Yahweh. The name of God. The psalmist is remembering the God who relates personally to Israel, who has made a covenant with his people.

And so he speaks of Yahweh when he says, I will remember the deeds of Yahweh. 13 times in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses tells the people of Israel to remember what Yahweh has done, what has happened to them.

[24 : 08] For example, very typical example, Deuteronomy chapter 15, he says, you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and Yahweh your God redeemed you.

Therefore, I command you this today. In the book of Exodus, the Lord institutes the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread. He institutes these things to help Israel remember what he has done for them.

And then on the night when he was betrayed, Jesus celebrated that Passover dinner and there he institutes the Lord's Supper, communion, in remembrance of him.

The Lord commanded, the Lord instituted these things so that his people would remember.

Remember him. That means that the Lord knows that remembering is hard for you.

He knows it. He expects it. He knows and expects that you'll get stuck in forgetfulness. He knows and he expects that you will begin to get unstuck as you remember the Lord your God who redeemed you.

[25 : 16] So, what practical habits are there that will help you remember the Lord? What means does the Holy Spirit tend to use to help you remember?

How do we sow seeds of remembrance that the Spirit causes to grow? One means that the Spirit uses is to remember the Lord through the regular reading of Scripture.

If you're involved in BSF or Every Man or Warrior, you know the regular reading of Scripture is a big part of the program for good reason.

You need regular intake of God's Word. In Psalm 119, the psalmist speaks of how vital the Scriptures are to remembering the Lord.

He says, I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. I will delight in your statutes. I will not forget your word.

[26 : 22] One author I recently read put it just in this wonderful way, I think. She wrote, as the workers paint the Golden Gate Bridge stroke by stroke, similarly, I paint my heart with the Word of God verse by verse.

It is a never-ending process. Just when I think I have finished, it is time to start over. What I painted a year ago or two years ago or ten years ago now needs a fresh coat of paint.

So, I go back and paint. If the foundations, cables, and rivets of my life are to hold up under all the environmental pressure from the outside world, I can't afford to not have God's holy word painted on the walls of my heart.

The salt content of the world around me is high and I am in desperate need of protection from rust and corrosion and all the things that threaten the safety of my spiritual infrastructure.

Bitter attitude? Paint it. Unbelief? Paint it. Pride? Paint it. Critical spirit? Paint it. Lust? Paint it. A thousand times over, we must paint all the beams and bolts, all the nooks and crannies of our hearts with God's word.

[27 : 50] Paint your hearts with God's word. Read it on paper. Read it on your phone. Listen to someone else read it. Listen to it on audio book. Whatever it takes, whenever you can.

Remember the Lord. You need the regular reading of scripture. Another means that the spirit uses is to remember the Lord through memorizing scripture.

Oh, one of the most underrated disciplines of all time. I speak from personal experience. The psalmist in Psalm 119 says, I have stored up your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

This is one of the best investments you can ever make. It will pay off. The scriptures that my mom made me memorize as a kid, they have paid off a thousand times over, over the course of my life. Having his words ready on my mind, available at any moment. When you have God's word here in your heart, when it is available at any time of day, any time of night, in any circumstance, you are better equipped to remember the Lord and to remember what he has done.

[29 : 03] Notice, the author of Psalm 77, there's all these little references that hearken back to the words of the book of Exodus and he remembers the crossing of the Red Sea.

And so you will be able to recall the commandments, the warnings, and the promises of the Lord if you remember the Lord through memorizing scripture. If you are especially stuck in forgetting, you can remember the Lord through journaling.

Remember the Lord through journaling. What I encourage people to do when they're having trouble remembering is schedule a regular time each day to sit down and write what has the Lord done for you.

To record what words, what actions of his have encouraged you, what people he brought into your life. About five years ago, I began journaling consistently and the reason I finally got into the habit of doing something I've been meaning to do for years was because I realized I was forgetting my life. It was all disappearing into the fog of memory and I was forgetting all sorts of details about my life story, losing opportunities to tell my future self, come and hear all you who fear God and I will tell you what he has done for my soul.

[30 : 25] Do your future self a favor. Tell your future self what he has done for your soul because you are going to forget. Then, you will need to regularly review what you have written down.

If it stays locked away and you never look at it, it's not going to help you. Turn to your journal, especially in moments when you are feeling discouraged and disoriented, in moments when you have blinkered out what the Lord has done.

You can remember him through journaling. The Holy Spirit can also help you remember the Lord through sometimes what I call personal monuments. Israelites would, when they had encounters with the Lord, they would commemorate those encounters by piling up stones into altars and they formed those monuments because they wanted to remember what the Lord had done.

Some of the rituals we do in church, whether it's communion, the Lord's Supper, are like these monuments. You can do something like this too for yourself.

Create a physical reminder that you will see regularly that will help you recall what the Lord has done for you, like photos you put on your fridge.

[31 : 43] I have a golf ball sitting on the shelf of my office. Sabian gave it to me to remind me of an important conversation we'd had. I have an, my emergency prayer verse is written on the whiteboard of my office.

It's been there for, oh, I don't know, a year at this point. I never erase it. I have these words, I have these objects because I forget and I need to remember.

You can remember the Lord through something like a personal monuments that you make. You're also commanded to remember the Lord through the gathering of believers. As it turns out, memory, remembering is a community activity.

You're not meant to just remember everything all by yourself. I mean, those of you who are married know that, right? For some of you, your spouse remembers things for you.

Maybe you're that spouse, I don't know. But we need one another to remember. Barring exceptional circumstances, every Christian is meant to gather together weekly.

[32 : 48] You do this because you are prone to forget and you need your brothers and sisters in Christ to help you. Remember, that's why the Holy Spirit gave them to you. Why would you quench the Spirit by failing to gather?

We especially do this when we're holding communion together. That physical act of eating and drinking the Lord's Supper. That is vital to remembrance, participating in it. You're meant to do that nowhere else but here.

In Hebrews chapter 10, we're urged, let us hold fast. This is a remembering thing. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering for he who promised is faithful.

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some. But encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

It is only a fool who would neglect to meet together because only a fool would think that he or she does not need that sort of help. That they can remember the Lord without it.

[34 : 00] It is no coincidence in my experience that people who fall away from the Lord that it begins by a drift into forgetfulness. as they abandon the regular reading of scripture, the regular practice of prayer, the regular gathering in person at worship services.

They stop painting the bridge and the bridge begins to rust and one day it collapses. and they no longer hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering.

Make every effort to gather together lest you forget. Make every effort to ensure your children are here as much as possible lest they forget.

Join a growth group, join BSF, join every man a warrior, do what you can, remember the Lord through the gathering of believers. prayers. And finally, the Holy Spirit, he helps you remember the Lord through prayers of remembrance.

I saved prayers of remembrance for last because it's something that personally I found very refreshing. A few weeks ago, I woke up one Thursday morning and I woke up feeling a refreshment, a lightness in my soul that I had not felt in so many months.

[35 : 19] and I was wondering, why? Why do I feel this way? And then I made the connection to what had happened the evening before. The evening before we'd held a prayer meeting.

In terms of church metrics, it wasn't an especially impressive meeting. I think it was only seven people came. Murray, was that about right? And that includes me.

Some of us arrived late. We all had to leave early. The meeting lasted like half an hour. In terms of church metrics, that was a failure. By all rights, I should have woken up discouraged and dejected. But what happened is that during that meeting, in those 30 minutes, we spent time in prayers of remembrance. We prayed to God. Each prayer we began by saying, Lord, I remember.

And we remembered together what God has graciously done for us in the biblical history of salvation. We remembered together what God has done in the history of our church family.

[36 : 28] We remembered together what God has done in the individual histories of our own lives and families. And we told God what we had seen, the good and the bad, how he's been faithful through it all.

We told God how this affected us, what we learned about him, what truths have encouraged us. We built our prayers on Psalms 105 and 106, these Psalms that are themselves prayers of remembrance.

And that practice was deeply, deeply refreshing. I was convinced we ought to do this again. When we hold prayer meetings in the future, we are going to do that again.

Because just like we've seen in Psalm 77, we find that there is a great reward to remembrance.

There is a great reward. That same God, the same God who Asaph saw was overseeing his present misery.

That is the same God of the covenant who saved his people in the past. And that means that he is faithful to do it again. And so what happens when we remember is that our eyes no longer only see the wind and the waves and how we're sinking.

[37 : 45] The solution to what Jesus calls little faith, the solution to those overwhelming fears and to the weak desire for the Lord isn't to fixate on ourselves.

Oh my, what little faith I have. How terrible. The solution isn't to rev up new feelings of enthusiasm to try to whip up your emotions and get motivated again.

The solution is to remember, is to remember the God in whom we trust, the God who is himself utterly desirable, utterly reliable, who is faithful and true.

One commentator makes this observation about Psalm 77. He knows that there is a big shift after the psalmist digs down and remembers more deeply.

He says, the shift halfway through the psalm is a shift from I to you, from self to God. It is a transition from hopelessness to possibility.

[38 : 57] Remember the Lord. Shift from self to God. Do this and your faith will grow.

Do this and your feelings will follow from hopelessness to possibility. I know of no practice, no discipline in the Christian life that will stabilize and refresh your faith and your feelings like remembering will.

There is a great reward to remembrance. Remembering is hard, but the Christian life without remembering is impossible, and I wouldn't wish it on anyone. we get stuck in forgetfulness, but the Holy Spirit is there.

The Lord is faithful. He remembers us, and remembering Him is how we get unstuck. So, do you remember? our Father, we come to you saying that you have been faithful.

You are great. You are good. You are with us. But we forget. You are so prone to forget. Sin hardens our heart.

[40 : 27] Suffering blinds our eyes. Shame deafens our ears. We come to you, and we remember. We remember your wondrous works.

You made a way through the Red Sea, leading your people by hand, though your footprints were unseen. you sent your own Son, humbling Himself by becoming a man, humbling Himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

You made a way for us to be forgiven. You made a way for us to be washed clean. You made a way for a new hope of resurrection life for everyone who believes in Jesus Christ.

Lord, I remember. We remember that you have done these things for us.

and so as we remember who you are, as we remember what you've done, fill us with a sense of possibility that you can do far more than we could ever ask or imagine for the sake of your name and the sake of your glory.

[41 : 53] Amen. verse 9 is tied to God's come to schauen up for the sake of God and let us explain the and lo Later in the cracks and allow us to T