

Remember to Remember God  
Deuteronomy 6:1-9  
February 23, 2020

As we grow older, we all experience some forgetfulness but did you know that forgetting things can actually be a blessing? I am not talking about forgetting bad experiences. Of course, forgetting bad experiences would be a good thing. I am not talking about that. Psychologists say that forgetting is an important part of remembering. Forgetting is actually a proper and important functioning of the brain. It does not make us any less smart.

Research shows that our brain has active mechanisms for forgetting. We are made to forget as well as to remember. Both storing and losing memories are important for selecting and holding the most relevant information.

Forgetting helps to get rid of outdated and unnecessary information. Forgetting the details also helps to generalize past experiences into specific categories; so that if we have a similar experience in the future, we would know what to do.<sup>1</sup> So, unless you have a serious memory loss, forgetting something is a normal experience. You forget so that you can remember other things, perhaps more important things.

That sounds all good but if you misplace your keys, eyeglasses or cell phone, it is annoying, isn't it? Did you know that people keep their landline to call their cell phone? Many people who live alone do that. If you live with someone, your spouse or your children, you can ask them to call your cell phone. Then you can locate it. Paula and I do that all the time. But if you live alone, and you have misplaced your cell phone, you need to use your landline phone to call your cell phone to find it.

I am sure some of you have done that? Some people need the cell phone, because it has an app that helps them to locate their car keys. When they have misplaced their car keys, they need the cell phone to use the app to find the keys. If they have forgotten where they put the cell phone, they must use the landline phone to find the cell phone so that they can find the keys. What a world we live in!

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<sup>1</sup> <https://psychcentral.com/blog/the-amazing-way-forgetting-helps-your-brain-function/>

We depend on our cell phones so much that it is almost impossible to live without them. As annoying as it is, this kind of forgetfulness is largely due to being busy, distracted, and inattentive. It may not be a serious problem.

However, if a man loses his memory completely, he loses everything. He gets disoriented. He gets lost. He loses his personality and character. He loses himself.

The same is true of societies. The memory of a society is its history, tradition and core values. When you lose them, you can no longer function as a unified society. Without a commonly treasured past, jointly held tradition and core values, a society cannot have a shared sense of purpose, direction, moral standard, or belonging.

History, tradition and mutually held core values have enormous influence on us. Our lives are shaped by them and are either blessed or cursed by them. But when our society loses our history, tradition and core values, we no longer recognize ourselves. This is true for any society or community or organization. The saddest thing is that we don't even know that we don't recognize ourselves anymore!

Thus, we become easily swayed by the culture that surrounds us, with all its biases and noises. We lose the standard by which we evaluate cultural and moral norms. We no longer recognize what is right and what is wrong. We become susceptible and swayable to accept proven lies as if they are newfound truths. We accept age-old problems as a part of God's created order. We repeat humanity's past mistakes as if they are newfound solutions. We have no idea of where our choices may lead – even when we see the results of the same choices in the ruined empires and destroyed lives.

I am afraid that many people in our country have forgotten our own history, tradition and core values. I am also afraid that many people in the Church, including our own denomination, have forgotten our own history, tradition and core values. As a result, we forget who we are and why we are here.

No wonder “remembering” is the central theme for God's people in the Scripture. God knows that we can easily forget our past. God's people are always in danger of losing their memory, forgetting who they are and whose they are.

The book of Deuteronomy is the record of Moses' final instruction for the Israelites before they cross the Jordan and occupy the Promised Land. Because

Moses knows that he will not be with them any longer he chooses his words carefully. And the essence of his message is: “Israel, remember who God is, what he has done, and to whom you belong!” “Remember and Don’t Forget” is the central theme!

“Only be careful,” Moses warns, “and watch yourselves closely so that you *do not forget* the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.”<sup>2</sup>

“When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. Be careful that you *do not forget* the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.”<sup>3</sup>

God’s people’s biggest danger is forgetting their own story; forgetting how God has delivered, led and intervened in their own lives.

So how shall we remember our story and remember God’s involvement in our lives?

Moses gives instructions to Israelites regarding what to do to remember God in their lives. He says: teach your story to your children (4:9), keep God’s decrees and commands and teach your children to observe them (6:1-9), keep the Sabbath (5:12-15), give thanks for your blessings (8:10), confess your sins (9:4-7), celebrate the Passover (16:1-3), tithe (26:1-11), act with justice and compassion toward employees (15:12-15), and take care of the immigrants, orphans and the poor (24:17-22).

Moses tells Israelites to do all these things because they are the acts that would remind them of God’s involvement in their lives and his blessings, mercies and grace.

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<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 4:9.

<sup>3</sup> Deuteronomy 8:10-14.

Like the Israelites, we are to remember the Lord our God and to remember what God has done for us. Like the Israelites, we need to practice our memory intentionally, deliberately and regularly. How should we do that?

If I translate Moses' message to our time, it would sound something like this. Tell your children about God's involvement in your own life. Keep God's commandments and Jesus' teachings and teach them to your children, so that they may keep them. Keep the Sabbath, be involved in the church. Do not neglect the Sunday worship. Give thanks for all your blessings. Confess your sins and turn away from them. Participate in the Holy Communion. Remember how God has blessed you and led you thus far. Tithe – let it be an expression of your thankfulness. Let your thankfulness be shown in tangible ways, through offerings and services. Treat people with kindness and compassion. Be kind to the needy.

Do all these to practice, exercise and train your brain and heart to remember God's involvement in your life. Don't forget, the greatest danger of God's people is their forgetfulness of God's mercy, grace and his involvement in their lives.

Remember to remember God each and every day!