

# RESPONSIBILITY TO REMEMBER

## DEUTERONOMY 8:11-20

Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, lest - when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them; and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, in which were fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the flinty rock; who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end – then you say in your heart, 'My power & the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.'

And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

Then it shall be, if you by any means forget the LORD your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish. As the nations which the LORD destroys

before you, so you shall perish, because you would not be obedient to the voice of the LORD your God.

A married couple was sitting in the sanctuary of the church, listening to the pastor's sermon. Suddenly the wife turns to her husband and whispers, "We need to leave right now and get home as fast as we can. I just remembered I left the iron on. I don't want the house to burn down."

Her husband never panicked. He said calmly, "Oh, don't worry about the house burning. I just remembered. I left the water running in the tub."

Today, I want to talk about remembering. It's Memorial Day weekend – the time Americans are suppose to recall the ultimate sacrifice of brave men and women who have laid down their lives to preserve our freedoms.

Yet how many of us will get caught in the fun and play – and spend the whole day Monday without giving our fallen soldiers a fleeting thought?

Here's my question... *Do you have a good memory?*

Once, a tourist visited an Indian reservation. He was told of a chief who had a perfect memory. The tourist was skeptical. He asked the chief, "Ok what did you have for breakfast on February 3, 1958?" The chief replied, "Eggs". The tourist scoffed, "Big deal. Everybody has eggs for breakfast."

Twenty years later, the *same tourist* visited the *same reservation*, and saw *the same chief*. He threw up his hand to greet the former acquaintance, “How!” The chief with perfect memory replied, “Scrambled.”

In Deuteronomy 8 the word “*remember*” occurs twice. The warning “*forget not*” occurs another three times. In fact, the book of Deuteronomy is full of encouragement to *forget not - to remember* what God has done.

According to our text, an important requirement for living a godly life is the ability to remember. *God makes it our responsibility... to remember!*

Whenever Kathy and I drive down Interstate 20 through East Atlanta she begins to cringe. She knows what's coming... I'm about to bore her with stories from my childhood that she has heard a hundred times before.

I grew up along Flat Shoals Road in Gresham Park. We went to church at the corner of Glenwood and I-20. My grandpa lived near Grant Park.

That stretch of highway stirs up and sweetens my mind with memories.

I remember climbing the oak tree in my grandpa's front yard, and eating delicious globes of fruit from his pomegranate tree.

I can still feel the wind in my hair as we road our skate boards from the top of our sloping subdivision all the way to the bottom street where I lived.

Every time I drive by the old church where my family attended I remember the time my friends and I climbed out the window of our second floor Sunday School class, and danced on the roof of the church.

Memories are a wonderful invention of God. They allow us to relive our joys, and highpoints, and good times over and over again. It's been said, "[Even that which was bitter to endure may be sweet to remember.](#)"

When I drive that stretch of highway I begin to reminisce - and though I bore my passengers... *I get giddy*. Good memories can be a lot of fun.

If your house actually did catch on fire, and you had time to fetch only a couple of items I'm sure it would include the family photo albums.

We cherish pictures that conjure up sweet memories – of weddings, and births, and Little Leagues, and birthday parties, and graduations.

From home movies, to VHS, to DVDs how much have you accumulated over the years? We even have the luxury of filming our memories.

I'm sure the Hebrews wished they'd possessed a camcorder. Think of the magnificent footage they could've filmed. Imagine a Hebrew family with a DVD. Someone suggests, "[Let's get out the discs, and look back on all God has done these past 40 years.](#)" Eavesdrop in on the conversation...

Little Joseph shouts, “Hey, fast-forward to the parting of the Red Sea. My favorite part is when the waters swallow up those Egyptian chariots.”

Uncle Samuel asks, “Show the clip when Moses struck the rock, and water gushed out. Cool! And it was the best water I’ve ever tasted.”

Sister Miriam chimes in, “All that manna on the ground looks as strange today, as it did in person. We thought God caused it to snow in the desert!”

Finally Mama Rachel makes her comment, “Put it on freeze frame so I can study that bronze serpent. You know, it saved my life from the plague. I’m sure it has some symbolic meaning we’ve yet to understand...”

And of course, if Hebrew homes are like mine, I’m sure someone piped in and complained, “*Who took this footage? Dad, you should’ve used a tripod, or kept his hand a little steadier - this picture is like a bouncing ball.*”

I’m sure if DVDs were around when Moses wrote Deuteronomy 8 he would’ve added the command, “*Pull out the photo albums, and watch the videos - and remember the wonderful works God has done in your life.*”

Several years ago a friend of mine took pictures of my family – she arranged them and cropped them – and made collages for my office.

I'm so thankful for those photos. Often I'll pause for a few minutes and take a trip down memory lane and thank God for His many blessings.

I have a basket full of pictures that remind me of the work God has done in and through Calvary Chapel. They help me to remember.

And we as Christians have a responsibility to remember...

But here's what I suspect, even if the Hebrews had videos and photos they'd still have to make an effort to remember what God had done. After I hang my pictures in my office I'll still have to work at *savoring* memories.

The problem with videos and photos is that they can be ignored.

I can get busy and walk right past picture frames.

Good memories, healthy recollections grow out of a *right attitude* – an attitude that is teachable, humble, trusting, grateful...

A **proud person** is focused on where he's headed, rather than be grateful for where he's been and what has caused his success.

A **discontented person** is preoccupied with what he can *get*. He forgets what he's been *given*... An **anxious person** is too busy worrying about what *might be*, rather than be thankful for what's *already been*... A **greedy person** has no problem taking the *gifts*, while always ignoring the *Giver*.

If you want to store up good and godly memories – and take seriously your responsibility to remember - you need to cultivate a right attitude.

On the day Moses led the Hebrews out of bondage he issued a command. Forty years earlier in Exodus 13:3, “Moses said to the people: “Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out of this place.”

Notice, **they were commanded to remember!**

Moses commanded Israel then, and in the years ahead – as people and children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren – as a nation – that they’re to do all they possibly can to fan the flame of their memories.

They’re to keep alive the recollection of God’s salvation and provision.

But here in Deuteronomy we’re 40 years removed from that earlier command. The years had taken their toll. A lot of water had gone under the bridge. After four decades the memories are not as fresh and vivid as they once were. Here in Deuteronomy 8:11, Moses addresses the second generation, and warns them, “**Beware that you do not forget...**”

Memory loss is a very real danger.

I’m always amazed at the memory of the kids in our school. Go to a CCCS program. You’ll hear them reel off verse after verse – it’s amazing.

The volume of Scripture they put to memory is astonishing. I'll never forget the year our 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders had Hebrews 11 - the entire chapter, all 40 verses – put to memory. Their minds are full of God's Word.

When you're younger you take for granted the ability to remember, but when you get older you realize what a blessing a good memory really is...

Here's a man's letter to his cousin. "Just a line to say I'm living, that I'm not among the dead. Though I'm getting more forgetful, and mixed up in my head. For sometimes I can't remember when I stand at foot of stairs, if I must go up for something, or I've just come down from there.

And before the 'fridge' so often my poor mind is filled with doubt, have I just put food in there, or have I come to take some out?

Certain nights I stand at foot of bed, and my brain get's really swirly, I don't know if I'm retiring, or just getting up a little early.

So remember I do love you, and wish that you were here, but I need to stop my writing, because the postman's drawing near. P.S. So I stand beside the mail box with my face so very red. Instead of mailing you this letter, I opened it instead." The older we get the more our memory fades.

I use to laugh at memory loss, until I witnessed firsthand what Alzheimers did to my grandma. She lived into her

late 80s, but suffered from a quickly progressing case of Alzheimers the last 3-4 years of her life.

At the end of her life she couldn't even remember her name.

At night, my grandpa would put her to bed, and she'd refuse to go. She would look into the face of her husband of over 60 years, and tell him she wasn't about to go to bed with a stranger. She wanted to go home.

My Mom would go visit her, and grandma wouldn't even recognize her own daughter. It was heartbreaking. Here was a woman who all she had left were her memories, but she couldn't enjoy them. A dreaded disease robbed her of what she spent years accumulating. If my grandma were here today I have no doubt she'd tell us to cherish and treasure our memories. They should be one of our most valued possessions.

This weekend is Memorial Day. A day we set aside to remember our fallen veterans. And nowhere does this occur more passionately than at the many memorials on our National Mall in Washington, DC.

People gather to remember at the WW2 memorial, the Korean War memorial, and a ceremony is held across the River at Arlington Cemetery.

At the Vietnam Memorial all throughout the year folks bring reminders of loved ones they lost in the war. These tokens of remembrance are gathered up, and shipped to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Collection.

A book called, "*Offerings at the Wall*" describe some of the mementos...

Along with dog tags and a headband, one man left a letter that read, "To all of you from Echo Company... I leave you my headband which contains my sweat from the war, my dog tag, and a picture of me.

Another time, another place... I'll never forget you."

An American flag was left at the wall, on which a young lady wrote the following words, "May all of you who died, all of you still missing, and all of you who returned home never be forgotten... Connie." There are some sacrifices and deeds so valiant they deserve to be remembered forever.

*And this is certainly true of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross!*

Jesus was heaven's soldier who offered up His life on the battlefield of sin. He took on the worst of enemies, and rose again in triumph.

It reminds me of the mother and daughter who were on their way to the zoo. It was Easter week, and as they drove past church after church the little girl counted the number of crosses. Finally she asked, "Mom, how many times did Jesus die?" Her mother assured her, "Only once dear."

*"Then why are there so many crosses?"*

The mother replied, "To help us remember how much Jesus loved us. He died on the cross to take our place."

The little girl was appalled – upset. Up in arms! She shouted, “How could we ever forget something *like that!*”

Indeed! How can we? The cross of Jesus should never be forgotten.

But what about the other wonderful blessings our God has poured out upon us. How many occasions has He parted our Red Sea?

There’ve been times where He’s brought water from a rock, and sent manna from heaven – *He’s provided us provision when none was in sight.*

Are we faithful to not forget?

Or do we have a reoccurring case of spiritual Alzheimers?

The sin of forgetfulness snuffs out the remembrance of God’s goodness and the rekindled fire of devotion that comes with those memories.

Over and over God forgives and works the miraculous in our lives, and each time we vow afresh to live for Him - but as the memory fades, so does the devotion and loyalty. It’s our tendency to forget, or minimized God’s miracles. We lose the motivation that comes with those memories.

*And if memory loss was a danger to the Hebrews, it can also be a danger for us... unless we maintain the right attitude and watch our heart...*

In today's text three statements are made about the heart...

Verse 14 mentions **the heart's posture...** Verse 17 speaks of **the heart's pronouncements...** Verse 19 discusses **the heart's pursuits...**

Deuteronomy 8 teaches us that by paying attention to our hearts we can develop an attitude that doesn't forget, but is faithful to remember.

First, notice **the heart's posture** can cause you to forget the Lord.

Verse 14 reads, **"when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage..."** We forget God's goodness when *our heart gets lifted up!*

In the down times – when your back is against the wall – when circumstances are difficult or complicated – when you're groping and seeking help – when your heart is humble – when you're needy, and we're willing to admit your desperation. It's in those times your memory peaks.

In the tough times we're quick to recall God's every promise. Every former act of His faithfulness becomes a lifeline to grasp and grip tightly.

But notice what Moses says in verse 12, **"when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them; and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; when your heart is lifted up,**

**and you forget the LORD your God”** After a time of prosperity – when your heart is lifted – when you’re life is riding high – that’s when you’re prone to forget.

Now that we’re eating steak and potatoes every night, and we’re in that nice house, and we’re got a little money socked away. Now that our *heart is lifted up* – it’s then, we tend to forget God, and how good He’s been!

It reminds me of the two shipwrecked sailors. No hope is in sight - as they drift in shark infested waters. One of the men grows so desperate he decides to call on God. He starts to pray, “God, I’ll give up my evil ways, foul language, taste for booze, love for women... if You’ll just send...”

That’s when his shipwreck sidekick jumps in and interrupts his desperation, “Wait! Don’t say another word! I think I see a ship!”

Apparently he didn’t think much of his friend’s sincerity. It amazes me how folks remember God when they need Him – then quickly forget Him when their heart is lifted up, and the need is no longer apparent.

One of my favorite prayers in the Bible is Proverbs 30:7-9, “Two things I request of You (deprive me not before I die): Remove falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches - feed me with the food allotted to me; lest I be full and deny You, and say, "Who is the LORD?" Or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God.”

In other words, God give me enough provision so I won't be tempted to steal, but not so much that I'll forget the source of my blessings.

The best way to remember the Lord is to never forget the down times.

Keep a fresh recollection of the trials and hardships and tests God puts you through. Hold on to the lessons you've learned. Recall His faithfulness!

There are two verses I hold side-by-side – *John 15:5* and *Luke 1:37*. The first quotes Jesus, “for without Me you can do nothing.” The second are the angel's words to Mary, “For with God nothing will be impossible.”

This Scriptural dynamic duo reminds me of two vital truths: **who I am in Christ**, and **what I'd be without Him**. Keep these verses side-by-side, and you'll keep your heart right. You'll never forget the mercies of God.

The posture of the heart can cause us to forget the Lord, but so can **the heart's pronouncements**. Verse 17 warns us of a potential danger, “then you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.'” *Beware, not to take credit that belongs to the Lord!*

Christians today are right to point out and complain about a problem we're encountering in our public schools – it's called *revisionist history*.

Politically-correct historians are stripping from our textbooks any mention of the prominent role played by our Judeo-Christian heritage in the development of our nation and culture. They're abandoning the facts and the truth to rewrite history in a way that serves their political agenda.

But on a more personal level, we too can be guilty of revisionist history.

We can say in our heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth' - when in fact, God is responsible for any and every blessing we'll ever possess. Our pride has a way of slanting the story.

Many of us are like the tick that nestled its way through the dog's hair, and latched on to its underside. We're sucking the blood from the dog, while he does the work. *Is this a description of your relationship with God?*

Write the word "God" backwards, and it spells "dog." Apparently, it's easy to get it all backwards and steal the glory that belongs only to God.

Like the dog, God is the one who's walking, and eating, and drinking, and exercising, and squirming under fences, and dodging high speed automobiles, and avoiding dogcatchers. And you're just the little tick that's going along for the ride, and drawing blessing and nourishment from God.

Get real! How dare you say in your heart, *that your power or the might of your hand* is responsible for anything that you've accomplished!

Be careful of the pronouncements we make in our hearts! There are statements we'd never utter in public, *but have we said them in our heart?*

Have you ever noticed that when you get together with old friends past achievements tend to swell, and former exploits become exaggerated?

This is especially true in athletics. "The older I get, the better I was."

What I tell my kids may or may not resemble what actually happened. The home run tends to grow in distance. The total points get rounded *up*.

A fish always grows in size after it's been cut up, or tossed back.

The further removed from the event the further stretched the accomplishment becomes. *And this happens in our experiences with God.*

An illusion develops - the tick starts bragging about how far and fast it traveled - the cars it dodged - the fights it won. As if there had been no dog at all. Mark Twain put it, "It isn't so astonishing, the number of things I can remember, as the number of things I can remember that aren't so."

An unguarded heart will make rash and boastful statements.

I know people who've simply talked their way into forgetting God.

They've been so busy articulating their own achievements and exploits they've forgotten the God who's been behind the scenes making it happen.

A heart that assumes the credit – that's preoccupied with its own goodness – is likely to forget the grace and goodness of God.

Finally, **the heart's pursuits** can cause us to forget God's kindness towards us. Verse 19 warns, **"Then it shall be, if you by any means forget the LORD your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish."**

Generally speaking, **what you love you remember**. I've had a few adventures in my life I've all but forgotten. We use to go rafting every year, and at the time it was a big deal – but don't ask me to recall any one trip. I can't. I've been snow skiing a few times, but I remember very few details.

But when it comes to people and activities I love – I've got the memory of an elephant. The day I asked Kathy to marry me seems like yesterday. I recall when Natalie was born. I couldn't believe God blessed me with a girl!

I can't remember a Braves game from the night before, but I can describe in detail games played years ago by my sons. I remember stuff they forgot. Like the first fish Zack caught, and Nick's first touchdown, and Mack's first home run. *And why do I remember these details?*

**Because you remember what you love!**

Alexander Pope puts it, “How vast a memory has love.” Or I’ve heard it put another way, “The art of remembering is the art of taking an interest.” It’s very difficult to remember something in which you have no real interest.

In preparing this message I ran across 10 tips for improving your memory. I’ll read the first five, and see if you notice a common thread...

“First, intend to remember. Second, understand what you are trying to remember. Third, organize what you want to remember into meaningful patterns. Fourth, become genuinely interested in what you want to remember. Fifth, review what you want to remember as often as possible.”

The underlying idea is that memory is enhanced by passion.

Little boys can memorize the stats of their favorite baseball players – batting average, and slugging percentage, and number of homers in 1994 - but those same little boys can’t remember their spelling words.

We’re inclined to remember those subjects we’re into – that captivate our interest. Put it this way, “You never forgets what you truly worship!”

In verse 19, Moses warns the Hebrews if they forget the *true God* they’ll follow *false gods* - but I think the reverse is also true. Allow other things to creep in – let other affections and ambitions crowd God out of the forefront of

your attention - *follow stuff rather than God* - and you'll forget Him.

Human beings are limited in how many different subjects they can focus on at the same time. I know women are better at this than men. I can't chew gum and walk simultaneously. Whereas Kath can iron, watch TV, read a book, and talk on the telephone - while she's spanking a kid. In my house women are better at multi-tasking - but even women have limits.

Your heart lacks the bandwidth for more than one supreme occupation.

Get too wrapped up in lesser pursuits and you won't have time or energy to seek the Lord... *and it won't be long until you forget Him.*

Guys, the best way to avoid a lapse in memory when it comes to God and His mercies is to maintain a right attitude. Check your heart...

*Does it have the right posture?*

*Does it make the right pronouncements?*

*Does it follow the right pursuits?*

The attitude of your heart is strategic. "After all God has done for you - after He's sent His Son to die in your place - sent His Spirit to live in your heart - written your name in the Lamb's Book of Life... How can you... how can you... forget the Lord your God and His Son, Jesus Christ."

Have you cultivated in your heart an attitude that doesn't forget?

I hope after today you'll take seriously your responsibility to remember!