

"The more a man can forget, the greater the number of metamorphoses which his life can undergo; the more he can remember, the more divine his life becomes."  
—Soren Kierkegaard

**03-Apr-09**

## **Memory and Humility**

Where we stand in the history of the United States and the entire world is both captivating and distracting. [The world](#) scene is tumultuous. While sitting comfortably in our homes, we watch monumental events transpire on the evening news: this worldwide bank is folding, that African country is falling into bloody revolution, this country is essentially bankrupt, and that failing institution is being tossed vast sums of money. Shaking our heads, we observe politicians unveil economic recovery plans that abandon common sense and forget past mistakes.

No less strenuous are our personal lives. After watching the world's woes on television, we slip into bed longing for rest only to find our minds running through worry after worry as quickly as news reporters progress from story to story. The growing tensions and demands of life in this world are enough to devour our conscious lives whole, making us forget all else.

[God](#), however, has given all of His children an important faculty, among others, that protects us from despair, discourages folly, and counters pride: memory. Memory is crucial to preserving the well-being of any nation or

individual, and it is central to our relationship with God. Memory situates and orients our present condition in its greater context, showing the causes of our current situation and providing commentary by example for how to proceed into the future.

National memory serves a nation by unifying its citizens in a shared national narrative. Americans share and derive patriotism from the struggles and ideas of the Founding Fathers, just as the English share a much longer history of the Anglo-Saxons, Normans, and the British monarchy. The memory of national history unifies. Further, every national history is blemished with mistakes that serve as invaluable instruction for future crises, though current administrations seem to be suffering amnesia.

Brethren in the church share similar unifying memories of their experiences together in the body of Christ, which also serve to edify the body in love and give [hope](#) and comfort ([Ephesians 4:16](#); [Romans 15:4](#)). Like national histories, church history should not only show us good examples leading to success, but also teach us how to avoid error ([I Corinthians 10:11](#)).

Personal memory serves individuals in a similar way. Memories bind us with our families, whether we remember vacations to the beach, cross-country road trips in an old moving van, or working together to delevan the house before the spring holy days. These memories unite family members into a shared, intimate experience that can never be broken—unless forgotten.

Memory's most important service is to our spiritual lives and relationship with God. Throughout the Old Testament, God requires Israel to construct memorials, forcing Israel—as a nation and as individuals—to remember what God had done and continued to do for them. God began this practice in His relationship with His people as early as Noah, using the rainbow as a memorial and promise ([Genesis 9:12-17](#)). God established with Abraham the practice of circumcision to serve as a memorial ([Genesis 17:9-14](#)). God's name, "I AM," revealed to [Moses](#) in [Exodus 3:14-15](#) is a reminder of what God has done, is doing, and will do. God has even given us a weekly [Sabbath](#) to stop, rest, and remember.

In addition to the Sabbath, all of [the holy days](#) contain an aspect of memorial important to their observance. The spring holy days are most notably based

on memory. God established them as a yearly reminder to the Israelites of His initial covenant with and promise to Abraham and of His deliverance of Israel out of bondage. By always remembering God's role in their history, the Israelites could never forget two important truths: They were utterly dependent on God, and they were obliged to maintain their covenant with God. Memory produced a proper fear and love of God, as well as cultivated humility.

[Deuteronomy 15:15](#) shows the crucial link between memory and humility: "You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore, I command you this day." Humility is dependent on memory while pride grows out of forgetfulness. Like the Israelites, we each need to remember all of our past circumstances that have brought us to where we are today. It becomes evident when reviewing our lives through memory that God's hand played a significant role in shaping our lives, from long before our conversion to the present.

Our memories remind us that God directs the course of our lives. Knowing this allows us to continue even when a seeming impasse arises. Most of us have had personal experiences with bosses or instructors unwilling to coordinate with us so that we could observe the Sabbath or holy days, or perhaps we have gone through months or even years when the bank account balance suggested that paying tithes was impossible. We can look back at these trials and remember the ways God intervened, as well as the consequences of choices we made, good or bad. These memories form a personal bank of experiences that we can draw from to remember God's active involvement in our lives. Even when our decisions opposed God's will, the memory serves as a negative example reminding us what not to do.

Losing a constant awareness of our past gives the illusion that we are dependent only on ourselves. The [Laodicean](#) becomes rich and able to support himself, forgetting upon whom his entire life truly depends ([Revelation 3:17](#)). Forgetting the source of his physical wealth, the Laodicean forgets the source of his spiritual wealth. Disconnection from our pasts deceives us into believing we have complete control over our futures. The Laodicean becomes complacent and prideful, considering himself able to take care of his own well-being. We cannot forget that God has been the source of our lives, our understanding of life itself and His purpose for us,

and the knowledge that His laws cannot be broken without penalty. As the Israelites forgot the true God in the wilderness and crafted an idol for themselves ([Exodus 32:1-6](#)), when we forget our dependency on God, we forge ourselves into our own idol.

God provides more than enough time to meditate on our past so that we never lose sight of our personal histories. He has given to us twenty-four hours every week, as well as the holy days, for the specific purpose of remembrance. On [Passover](#) evening, not one of us will forget the sacrifice of [Jesus Christ](#) that makes eternal life possible. But unlike the backward-looking memorials under the Old Covenant, having God's Spirit we remember, look forward, and move toward the [Kingdom of God](#), which Christ and the Father are preparing us for now.

- Staff

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## From the Archives: Featured Sermon

### [Remembering God's Gifts, Promises, and Rewards](#)

by John O. Reid (1930-2016)

God gives us the capability of remembering in order to learn and retain lessons, fortifying us in the midst of grave trials. During these times of intense distress and tribulation, God expects that we use our memories to reflect upon His gifts, promises, and rewards. His gifts include His Holy Spirit enabling eternal life, spiritual gifts to enrich the church, and inspiration during a trial. God's promises include the assurance that He cannot lie, that godliness has immediate and long-term profit, and that He will never, never, never, never leave us. God's rewards include attaining the mind of God, membership in His family with a new name, an office or responsibilities in the Kingdom of God-dependent upon our current efforts (at overcoming and growing) related to the abilities, talents, and opportunities He has given us.

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## From the Archives: Featured Article

**Remember Lot's Wife**

by Ted E. Bowling

Lot's wife is best known for that fact that she looked back and became a pillar of salt. What was so important that she yearned for Sodom? Ted Bowling explains why her example is important to us today.

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