

*Roses
in
December*
Why God Gave Us Memory

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Dedication

To my loving family

*Thanks for the precious memories we have
shared during the happy times as well as the
tough ones. I love you dearly.*



*The years fall gently from thee,
love . . . as petals,
when the blossom's done.
I gather each one tenderly
and save the petals,
one by one.
I place each one within
my heart and very slowly,
one by one,
the petals form a rose again . . .
forever sweet,
forever young.*

Author Unknown

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A Rose for Jane

As Jane has recounted the memories from years past that are now becoming *Roses in December*, she is totally unaware that she is a precious rose in so many lives. She has inspired thousands with her writings; many hundreds have been fed from her own pocketbook; and hundreds of nursing home residents have been cheered by cards, flowers, candy, and balloons when no one else, not even their own families, seemed to care. She is a pen pal to countless prisoners who are so lonely. She has graded more than five thousand Bible correspondence courses, writing personal letters with each lesson to explain answers. She always includes a paragraph praising and encouraging them in their desire to study the Word of God.

Women have learned to love and obey God through Jane's classes and one-to-one teaching. Cards and calls come in almost daily, thanking her for caring. She has received numerous letters from people who are now in their midlife years, but we knew them when they were teenagers. They still remember "little" things Jane did thirty or forty years ago that had great impact upon them. After her critical injuries in 2005 she received nearly a thousand cards from forty-four states, all of them mentioning ways she had touched their lives.

Those who benefit from Jane's lovely life are those closest to her—her own family. Her labor of love has sustained us in countless ways. Her faith has inspired us, and her courage to survive and to continue actively serving God has strengthened us. As the one who has lived with her more than fifty years, I can say with all sincerity that she is the most Christ-like person I have ever known. Such intimate knowledge is sure to reveal the whole person, thorns and all. But if there are any thorns, I have never found one.

There are many ways to preserve roses to keep them special and very precious. But the treasured roses are held dear only

because they were special when they were fresh blossoms. Enjoy roses while they live and preserve their memories for December. Our children, grandchildren, and countless others will preserve Jane in memory for the years to come.

To Jane, my precious wife: I will enjoy you as a beautiful blossom my whole life. You are a rose in so many lives, but mine most of all.

—Don

Introduction

Priceless memories! It is sad, but true, that the passing of time often brings a deeper appreciation of yesterday's fleeting moments. When we are young, we usually live in the present and long for the future, with little thought of the treasures stored within our hearts.

The seeds of this study were first planted thirty year ago when my daddy brought some boxes to our house from the attic of my childhood home in Nashville, Tennessee, shortly after the death of my mother. There were scrapbooks, pictures, letters, diaries, report cards, and mementos of special events in my life. Because I had not seen most of the contents since my girlhood, opening those boxes brought floods of memories that were just as vivid as the day they happened. At that time I thought, *Someday I'm going to write a study for ladies' Bible classes on the power of memories, both good and bad.* Good intentions have a way of eluding us. We mean well, but . . .

Eighteen years later, a second incident caused me to appreciate the power of memories even more. Because my daddy was growing frail, I decided to capture the tales of his colorful childhood in his own voice on an audiotape for our grandchildren to hear in years to come. While he was visiting our home about six months before his death, he and I sat down with a recorder and just talked about what life was like in Franklin, Tennessee, during the early 1900s—playing under the house with his red fire engine, going with his father, a horse-and-buggy doctor, to make house calls, his escapades at school, his trips to Hawaii with the merchant marines, working in the orchards of California, meeting my mother, and their early years together, and the retelling of countless other stories from his life. What treasures!

When Daddy passed away just a few months after our recording session, a third incident sharpened my awareness of the power of memories. Greg, our son, brought to our house

two or three boxes from the attic in my daddy's latest home. He had always been a packrat. Much of the *stuff* in the boxes should have been thrown away many years ago because it was just *junk*. However, there were some nuggets of gold in those well-worn cardboard boxes—pictures of my daddy that I had never seen; the letter his father had written to him when the rebellious teenager had left home to join the merchant marines; the words he had penned to my mother's father, asking for her hand in marriage; and many other priceless possessions. Stored in one of those boxes was one of Daddy's treasures—his little red fire engine with Franklin's dirt still clinging to its wheels.

As I sat there, surrounded by the mosaic of Daddy's life, I thought to myself, *These particles of the past should not be stuffed into boxes and stored in a musty attic. Instead, they should be passed on to the next generation as part of their own DNA of who they are and where they have come from.* That red fire engine was so symbolic of something precious to my daddy that it needed a place of honor. It found that place on a special shelf in the den, along with his worn cap pistol and special pictures.

With determination I began the task of adding our own family's memorabilia to those of my daddy's keepsakes by dragging out all of our own snapshots, school awards, letters, and other precious items from the closets, drawers, and boxes. Beginning with the year 1898—the date of a family picture made on the front porch of my great-grandfather's home—I pieced together the narrative of our family in a number of scrapbooks for each of our children, identifying the people and giving the approximate dates.

At this point, my intention for doing a study on the power of memories was still just that—a good intention. During the next few years my project fluttered in the breeze as I occasion-

ally brainstormed some ideas on a sheet of paper in my Bible, but the project never really gained any altitude.

This book might only be a fluttering today, if it had not been for the power of a fourth incident: the fiftieth reunion of my high school class. I had not attended one in the previous forty-seven years, and it was amazing how much everyone else had changed!

Before the dinner, most of the class members were looking at one another's senior picture identification tags before initiating conversation. Once the program got underway, however, all of us were transported back to the halls of our alma mater. As antics were told, school songs were sung, and events were relived, we could almost feel the oiled floors beneath our feet and smell the blackboards. Even though the school building had long since been gone, our roots, our struggles, our victories, our joys, and our tears were just as fresh as if they had happened only yesterday. Oh, the transporting power of memories! I left the building that evening with a resolve to *do* something with the ideas I had carried close to my heart for so long. I began to write *Roses in December*.

Approximately two years after my high school reunion, while working on this book, an unexpected package arrived in the mail from one of my high school classmates. In cleaning out some boxes in her attic, she discovered some fifty-year-old memorabilia. She enclosed two yellowed copies of the *Litton Blast*, our high school newspaper, because it contained some articles of interest to me. She had also found her scrapbook from high school days with many clippings about school events. Unselfishly, she sent it to two classmates who host a yearly reunion at their farm near Nashville so it could be enjoyed by all. In a later letter she related how much that scrapbook had meant, especially to one of our classmates who had been diagnosed with cancer and given only six months to live. He wrote to her, expressing his appreciation because he had kept no keep-

sakes of those days. He made copies for his grandchildren because he felt he could have no greater gift to pass on to them.

Roses in December is not a compilation of my remembrances. Instead, it is an in-depth study of the transforming power of memories. We will explore the importance God placed on remembering in several different categories, noting particularly the observance of the Passover in the Old Testament and the Lord's supper in the New Testament, in addition to the Jewish Feast of Purim. We will consider memory's transporting power as well as the fundamentals of how memory works and the dynamics of both short-term and long-term memory.

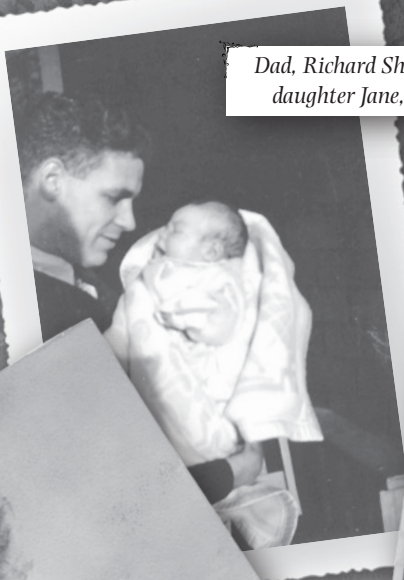
Not all memories are pleasant. If we are honest, we all have a few dark ones tucked deeply inside our beings. What can a Christian do to alleviate the pain of hurtful memories?

This book also carries the reader beyond the factual aspects of memory to delve into some practical ways of shaping memories for our children, other family members, and all those around us. We will share ideas on preserving our own memories. The last chapter, dealing with our memories of God, is probably the most important one of all.

Please accept my personal invitation to walk with me on this unique journey into the mirror of your life: the crucible that has greatly shaped the person you are today.

—Jane McWhorter
February 2007

Dad, Richard Shannon, with daughter Jane, 3 months



Jane at age two.

Jane, age 2, with her puppy



Jane, age 3



Oct. 19, 1943
Chanute Field, Ill.



Dear Mother
will after
sure we
was
to

ice M. Hicks
at #1
Alhoun City,
Miss.

letter I just finished reading
you and to know all
a few lines leave me
it will be o. k.
sorry to hear
will happen
of it.



Walking Down God's Memory Lane

The Bible is a treasure chest of examples of remembrances; their golden threads run throughout the pages of the Scriptures. Beginning in Genesis with God's covenant with Noah (Genesis 9:15) and continuing to the His rebuke of ungodly Babylon (Revelation 18:5), the inspired writers chronicled various nuances of the words *remember* and *memory*. Although space will not permit a detailed study of each passage, I invite you to glimpse into a few highlights.

Old Testament Examples

Noah

After 150 days of floodwater on the earth, God “remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the animals that



were with him in the ark. And God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided” (Genesis 8:1). After Noah built an altar on the dry land, God made a covenant with this patriarch and his sons. Never again would the earth be destroyed by water. The token of that covenant was to be the rainbow. “The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth” (Genesis 9:16). The beautiful rainbow is God’s visual reminder of His promise to Noah and his family. Each time we look at this beauty of nature, we are reminded of that promise.

Joseph

Every Bible student is familiar with the story of Joseph and his two companions in Pharaoh’s prison—the chief butler and the chief baker—who had offended their ruler. Joseph interpreted a dream for each of them. The baker’s dream bore ill will; three days later he was beheaded. The interpretation of the butler’s dream was more favorable, however, and he was restored by Pharaoh to his former position. “Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him” (Genesis 40:23).

After the passing of two years, Pharaoh himself had a perplexing dream. Its interpretation even eluded the wise men of the court. Finally the light dawned upon the chief butler as he said, “I remember my faults this day” (Genesis 41:9). He went on to tell Pharaoh about a young foreign prisoner who could interpret dreams. The rest of the story is history.

Sabbath Day

What an awesome sight Mount Sinai must have been with the quaking, thunder, lightning, and thick clouds of smoke ascending like the smoke of a furnace. Out of the midst of this spectacular sight descended the leader of the nation of Israel with two tables of stone containing the Ten Commandments. One of those commandments had its roots in the early dawn of



creation: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8).

Jehovah then explained that this remembrance was based upon the fact that He Himself had rested on the seventh day. Each week he wanted His people to rest from their labors, just as He had done, and remember the majesty of the Creator. Remembering and resting were so important that one day each week was to be set aside for that purpose.

Exodus 31:12–17 further emphasizes the importance Jehovah placed upon the Sabbath as a means of remembering. “It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed” (Exodus 31:17).

In the listing of the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy, additional light is shed on the reason for resting:

And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day (Deuteronomy 5:15).

No more would the Israelites have to work continuously in slave labor. Now each week there would be one day of rest from honest work and for remembering the mighty hand of God.

The Israelites Admonished to Remember

Moses told the people to remember their rebellion toward God from the time they left the land of Egypt until that present time (Deuteronomy 9:7–8). He elaborated on their disobedience—climaxing in the making of the golden calf—while he was on the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments. He then reminded them of their sinfulness in several other places,



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concluding with these words in verse 24: “You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you.” What terrible things to remember!

Moses concluded by stating that he had asked Jehovah to remember something—His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He had then asked God to overlook the rebellion and stubbornness of the Israelites during the wilderness years, remembering that they were His chosen people.

Milestones in Remembering Slavery

As the time drew near for the invasion and the possession of the promised land, the Israelites’ doubts and fears were to be dispelled by remembering what God had done to Pharaoh and all Egypt (Deuteronomy 7:17–18).

When a good land was promised, God’s people were also admonished to “remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not” (Deuteronomy 8:2). Their wilderness hardships were for a purpose. They were not to forget the reason.

Wealth and the good life can cause people to forget God today just as it did thousands of years ago. In the same context, God’s people were warned not to forget all He had done for them when they prospered (Deuteronomy 8:11–20).

The Jews were commanded to observe three main feasts each year to help them remember their slavery and hardships in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 16:16):

1. The Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover)
2. The Feast of the Tabernacles (Feast of Booths)
3. The Feast of Weeks (Pentecost)

✠ *The Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover)* will be fully discussed later. For now, we’ll summarize its purpose. It was designed to commemorate the night the Lord passed over



the houses of the Israelites where the blood of a lamb had been sprinkled. Inside those humble dwellings God's people had stood with staffs in hand, awaiting their deliverance as the Lord had promised. Once each year, in late March or early April, the Jews were to remember that significant night in Egypt when they were freed from slavery.

- ✠ *The Feast of the Tabernacles (Feast of Booths)* was observed at harvest time in early fall. Its purpose was twofold. Dwelling in booths made of tree branches and palm leaves for seven days was designed to help the Israelites remember their vintage life and also their years of wandering in the wilderness without any permanent dwellings.

The advantage of remembering the days of slavery in Egypt also prompted the giving of a commandment in Deuteronomy 24:17–18. The Israelites were admonished not to take advantage of strangers, the fatherless, and widows: “But you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this thing.” Later in that chapter the same reasoning prompted the law pertaining to leaving part of the crops in the fields and vineyards for the strangers, the fatherless, and the widows. “And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do this thing” (Deuteronomy 24:22).

- ✠ *The Feast of Weeks (Pentecost)* was observed in late May or early June and celebrated the close of the grain harvest. In commemoration of the time when the Israelites were homeless in Egypt, they were admonished to remember their servants, the strangers, the fatherless, and the widows among



*“Remember
that you
were a slave in
Egypt, and the
Lord your God
redeemed
you from
there.”*



them because they themselves were once bondmen in Egypt (Deuteronomy 16:12).

God did not want His people to forget all those years of back-breaking slavery in a foreign land. That remembrance should have prompted their thankfulness for the overseeing hand of God.

Further admonitions regarding the remembrance of slavery can be found in Numbers 11:4–15. The people grew restless. Growing weary of the monotony of manna, God's people complained,

Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes! (Numbers 11:4–6).

Because the people's whining and complaining were more than Moses could bear, God told His faithful leader to select seventy men to help him in settling disputes. Later, in the same chapter, the Jews got their meat in the form of quail. After gorging themselves, many were smitten with a plague.

Fringes on Garments

God instructed Moses to command the people to make fringes on the borders of their garments

that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them, and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined, and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God (Numbers 15:38–40).

Signs on Doorposts

In an effort to help the Israelites remember some of God's most important commands, He reminded them through Moses that the divinely inspired words should be written in their own



hearts before they even tried to teach them to someone else (Deuteronomy 6:4–6).

Next, the parents were to instruct their children throughout the day's activities, beginning when they got out of bed, as they were going about household activities, when they walked outside their homes, and as they went to bed at night. In other words, faithful parents were first to remember God's inspired words themselves. Then they were to take every advantage of helping their children remember what God had said.

In addition to parents' committing God's commands to their own hearts and orally teaching them to their children throughout the day, Jehovah designed a third method. Some of these divine commands were written on parchment and then covered with leather—frontlets or phylacteries—to be worn on their heads and as well as on their arms. Those designed for the arm were usually tied on the left arm, a little below the elbow. The ones for the head were tied and worn resting on the forehead. What powerful visual aids were given to help the Israelites remember the importance of God's words!

Remember Miriam

Deuteronomy 24:9 urged God's people to "remember what the Lord your God did to Miriam." Numbers 12:1–16 recounts the story of the disobedience of Aaron and Miriam that was sparked by Moses' choice of an Ethiopian woman as his wife. In jealousy the two tried to undermine his authority by claiming that God had also spoken by them.



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someone else.*



Jehovah called the three siblings to the tabernacle, where He came down in the pillar of a cloud and spoke to them, confirming His choice of Moses as His spokesman.

When the cloud departed, God's anger was manifested in Miriam's sudden leprosy. (The Scriptures do not reveal why Aaron was spared.) Because of her disobedience, the entire nation of Israel—thousands of people—stopped and waited for the allotted seven days for Miriam's purification.

The Israelites were later admonished by Moses to remember what had happened to Miriam as a reminder that disobeying God can only lead to heartaches.

Some Parting Words of Moses

Shortly before the death of Moses, he wrote what is called "The Song of Moses" (Deuteronomy 32:1–43). In verse 7 he advised them to "remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations. Ask your father, and he will show you; your elders, and they will tell you." What a heritage the Israelites had to remember—all their ancestors' blessings as well as their wrongs. Sadly, the remembering didn't always help them do what was right.

When Moses died on Mount Nebo and Joshua assumed his position of leadership, the new leader told the people to "remember the word which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, 'The Lord your God is giving you rest and is giving you this land'" (Joshua 1:13). They needed that memory to give them courage for the task that lay ahead.

A Memorial at Gilgal

Memorials are visual reminders of significant events. In Washington, D.C., a number of structures have been erected to enable the citizens to remember the significance of some important people or events, such as the Lincoln Memorial, the Washington Monument, and the Vietnam Wall.



Jehovah wanted the Israelites to remember their miraculous crossing of the Jordan River when they entered the promised land (Joshua 4:1–24). After the people had passed over to dry ground, twelve men—a representative from each tribe—each took a stone from the river and carried it to the other side to be set up as a memorial in Gilgal.

The people were instructed to relate this awesome event when their children asked, “What are these stones?” The parents were to tell the younger ones about walking through the Jordan River on dry land, just as they had done forty years before when the Red Sea had opened up for their passage.

All the Israelites needed to be aware of two miraculous passages through large bodies of water. They also needed to be reminded of the power of God and His providence. The twelve stones helped them remember. That was important.



*The twelve
stones
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Samson

When Delilah tricked Samson, a judge of Israel, into telling her the secret of his strength, the Philistines captured him, put out his eyes, and brought him bound to Gaza. At the time of sacrifice to the pagan god Dagon, the lords of the Philistines made sport of Samson by calling for him to be set between the pillars of the temple.

After asking to feel the pillars of the building, Samson called unto the Lord and said, “O Lord God, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!” (Judges 16:28).

Because Samson’s hair had grown back between the time of his capture and this event, his strength had returned. By taking hold of the two middle pillars of the temple, he was able to kill more people at the time of his death than during his lifetime.

Samson had asked the Lord to remember him. God listened.

Hannah's Request for Remembrance

We cannot begin to imagine the disgrace that childless Hannah must have felt. Year after year, she accompanied her husband Elkanah, his other wife Peninnah, and their children to worship at the tabernacle in Shiloh. Peninnah tormented Hannah with ridicule. The Bible tells us “her rival also provoked her severely, to make her miserable, because the Lord

had closed her womb” (1 Samuel 1:6). Because this taunting went on year after year, Hannah’s heart was so grieved that she couldn’t eat. Elkanah’s reassurance of his love and devotion was not enough. Hannah felt disgraced.

In desperation and despair, she prayed to God in tears at the tabernacle, making a vow that if God would only “look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant” (1 Samuel 1:11), she would give that child to His service at the tabernacle. God looked at Hannah and remembered (1 Samuel 1:19).

In due process of time, she became the mother of Samuel.

Hannah remembered too. When her precious child was weaned, she took him to the tabernacle with an offering. How difficult it must have been to part with Samuel, but she had made a vow. She remembered that vow and gave her child to the Lord for a life of service.

Abigail Asked to Be Remembered

For ten years David and his band of followers darted from place to place in the wilderness as King Saul pursued them. But David and his men caused Nabal’s workers no harm and even



*Nabal
didn't think
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any help from
anyone; he felt
no obligation
to David.*

protected them as they cared for the sheep (1 Samuel 25:15–16). In return, David asked for supplies.

This wealthy man is described as being churlish and evil in his doings (1 Samuel 25:3 KJV). He didn't think he needed any help from anyone and felt no obligation to David. Not only did he refuse David's request, he also wrapped his reply in the greatest of insults:

Who is David, and who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants nowadays who break away each one from his master. Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men when I do not know where they are from? (1 Samuel 25:10–11).

David was furious and prepared to fight Nabal. His wife, Abigail, “a woman of good understanding and beautiful appearance” (1 Samuel 25:3), listened to the words of one of her husband's young men when he told her about the proposed attack.

Abigail was wise, realizing that actions usually speak louder than words. Sending servants ahead with abundant supplies, she slipped away from her husband on a donkey. When David first encountered Abigail, he was very angry. Falling down before him, she apologized for the behavior of her husband and asked for forgiveness. She then praised him and asked him to remember her when he became ruler over Israel (1 Samuel 25:31).

David did not wait to remember Abigail. He blessed her at that moment. When Nabal died shortly after this incident, David not only remembered Abigail—he married her!

Perhaps David's mercy at this time, as well as other incidents, prompted Solomon's petition many years later at the dedication of the temple: “O Lord God, do not turn away the face of Your Anointed; remember the mercies of Your servant David” (2 Chronicles 6:42).



Wise Words of Solomon

In the first chapter of Ecclesiastes, Solomon wrote about the vanity of earthly things. “There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of things that are to come by those who will come after” (Ecclesiastes 1:11). He continued in the next chapter with some words about the folly of wisdom: “For there is no more remembrance of the wise than of the fool forever, since all that now is will be forgotten in the days to come. And how does a wise man die? As the fool!” (Ecclesiastes 2:16).

After many words concerning the vanities of life, David’s wise son ended his writing with some advice to young people about what really mattered: “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’” (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

Nothing in this life is as important as remembering our Creator and making Him Lord of our lives. Solomon’s concluding words were, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all” (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

New Testament Examples

Mary’s Memories

In the New Testament one of the first instances of saving special memories can be found in the second chapter of Luke. When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, an angel of the Lord appeared to some shepherds as they watched their flocks on the gently rolling hills surrounding the little town.

On that night the shepherds found the new-born baby, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, just as the heavenly messenger had said. Soon these common men spread the news of the announcement made to them concerning Jesus’ birth. Their message reached far and wide.



Imagine seeing the world that night through Mary's eyes. She was a young teenage girl, married to Joseph, a common carpenter of Nazareth. From the beginning of her pregnancy, she had known that this was to be no ordinary child and neither was He conceived according to the natural laws of nature. At that time she was engaged to Joseph, but they had had no sexual union. Imagine the gossip of the town when it was learned that Mary was pregnant. In haste she fled to Elizabeth, an older relative who lived in Judea. That was a long journey for such a young girl! After staying with Elizabeth for a while, Mary returned to home to await the birth of her baby. Any sense of security must have been shattered when Caesar's decree concerning taxation was issued, mandating a journey to Bethlehem. It was almost time for her delivery!

So much happened to this very young girl in such a short time. The trip to Bethlehem had been a long and arduous one. Mary must have been anxious when they were turned away from the inn that night with only the offer of a stable to be shared with animals. Here, on a bed of straw with only Joseph to assist, the Son of God was born to a teenage girl. We can only wonder what her thoughts were at that moment—no grandparents to hold the new baby, no brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, or other relatives. All alone Mary and Joseph rejoiced over the birth of their firstborn. We can only imagine their wonder when they heard some approaching footsteps in the night.

As the shepherds one by one looked at the tiny baby, could Mary truly have comprehended the significance of their visit? Had the walls of the stable shielded the eyes of the new parents from the glory of the Lord that had shone around the shepherds when the angel made his appearance to them, or were they aware of something strange that happened



*Imagine the
gossip of the
town when it
was learned
that Mary was
pregnant.*



on the Judean hillside? In the stillness of the night had they heard the voices of the multitude of the heavenly host praising God? Had they heard a commotion when the shepherds made their way into Bethlehem at that time of the night? What did Mary and Joseph think when a group of rugged men suddenly appeared at the entrance of the humble stable?

“But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart” (Luke 2:19). In the years to come, the young mother had no photographs, no scrapbooks, no home movies, no videos, no DVDs but, oh, what memories were etched in her heart! She would never forget that night.



We tend to overlook the wrongs we have done to others, as if ignoring them will make them go away.

Remembering at the Altar

In Matthew 5:21–26 Jesus taught His followers a lesson concerning anger. Whereas the old law condemned killing, His new teaching made anger—the cause of so many murders—just as sinful as actually taking someone’s life.

Jesus drove the point home by making an application to everyday life. If anyone brought a gift to the altar—a common occurrence—and remembered that a brother had something against him—he himself had sinned against that brother—he should go to that person and ask for forgiveness before finishing his worship.

All too often we tend to overlook, or even forget, the wrongs we have done to others, as if ignoring the hurts will make them go away. Christ said that we are to remember our wrongs and do something to make them right.

Titus Remembered the Obedience of the Corinthians

Paul discussed his joy over the repentance of the sinful members of the church at Corinth (2 Corinthians 7:13–16). Titus

shared this same joy “because his spirit has been refreshed by you all” (v. 13). In verse 15 Paul further emphasized the depth of Titus’ feelings by stating, “And his affections are greater for you as he remembers the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him.” Nothing brings more joy to a gospel preacher than the memory of the obedience of people to the teachings of Christ.

Remembering the Thessalonians

In Paul’s introductory remarks to the Thessalonian Christians, he stated that he, Silvanus, and Timothy were thankful for them, making mention of them in their prayers and “remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God” (1 Thessalonians 1:3–4).

Wouldn’t it be rewarding if gospel preachers could remember the works of faith, the labors of love, and the patience of hope in the lives of all whom they had taught?

Conclusion

In this beginning chapter we have considered the importance of memory throughout the Bible. Students of His Word should stand in awe of the importance of the golden threads of memory and ponder their lessons just as Mary did on that night so long ago.



1. What was God’s covenant with Noah and his sons? (Genesis 9:11). What was to be the visual reminder of this covenant between Jehovah and mankind? (Genesis 9:16).



2. How could the butler have forgotten his promise to Joseph? (Genesis 40:23). If you had been Joseph, how would you have felt?
3. For what two reasons were the Jews told to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy? (Exodus 20:11; Deuteronomy 5:15).
4. In Deuteronomy 9:6–29, the Israelites were told to remember their rebellion against God. In what ways had they rebelled? In this context, what had Moses asked Jehovah to remember?
5. What did the Feast of Weeks help the Jews to remember? (Deuteronomy 16:12).
6. The remembrance of the Israelites' slavery in Egypt was to prompt their merciful treatment of what groups of people? (Deuteronomy 24:17–18, 22).
7. What was the purpose of the fringes on the garments of the Jews? (Numbers 15:38–40).
8. In the Deuteronomy 6, how were parents to help their children remember the word of God? What were they first to do before they attempted to teach their children?
9. Why were the Jews to remember what God did to Miriam? (Deuteronomy 24:9).
10. As Moses stood on Mount Nebo to view the promised land, what thoughts must have run through his mind? (Deuteronomy 34:1–8).
11. The stones at Gilgal were to remind the people of what two events? (Joshua 4:1–24). What is the value of memorials or other visual reminders?
12. Describe the circumstances under which Samson asked God to remember him (Judges 16:28).
13. Why did God remember Hannah? (1 Samuel 1:1–28). How did Hannah remember her promise to God?

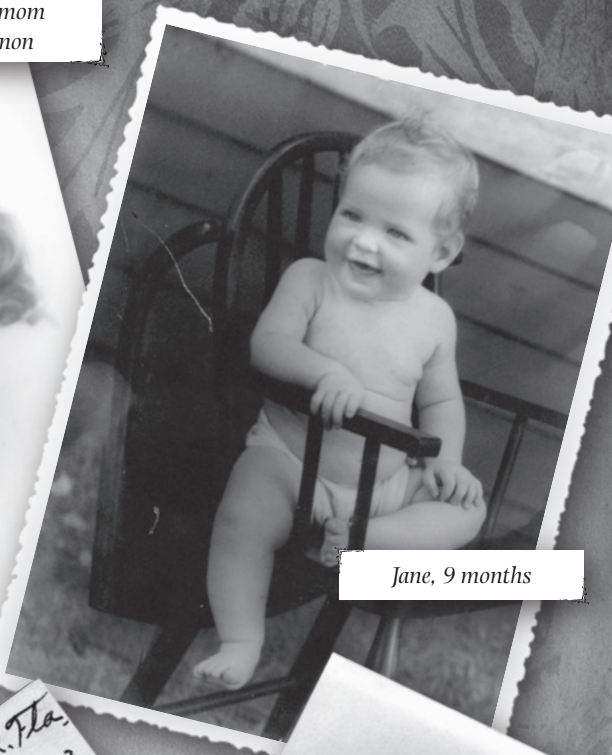


14. What prompted Abigail's request that David would remember her when he became king? (1 Samuel 25:1–42).
15. What is the reasoning behind the admonition to remember the Creator in the days of youth? (Ecclesiastes 12:1).
16. Try putting yourself in Mary's place and then describe the events that she undoubtedly pondered in her heart on the night Jesus was born (Luke 2:19).
17. If a person goes to worship and remembers that someone else has something against him, what is he first to do? (Matthew 5:21–26).
18. What remembrance brought joy to Titus? (2 Corinthians 7:15).
19. What good things did Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy remember about the Thessalonians? (1 Thessalonians 1:3–4).

Jane, age 6, with mom
Elma Delk Shannon



Jane, 9 months



Jane, age 3

Land all
thought I would answer your letter?
I am sure was glad to hear from you and
well this beaver me, at the
a little better today
was to



Old letter and postcard from
memorabilia



for 2
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wrote
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Remembering: The Passover

One night in Jewish history was so special that God commanded it to become a yearly remembrance. The Passover had its origin in Egypt over four hundred years after Jacob and his offspring made their way into a strange place when famine had devastated their own land.

In our Bible classes sometimes we discuss the facts but fail to even begin to fathom the emotions of that night of deliverance. As a young girl I was blessed with a teacher who had the ability to make each of the characters step out of the written pages and seem so real that I could almost feel the sand in my own shoes as we traced the footsteps of God's people in Egypt and the wilderness.

In this chapter we will gain not only a mastery of the facts surrounding this momentous occasion but we will also experience the emotions that must have accompanied the events of that night thousands of years ago.