

## November 29, 2009: “Remember What God Has Done” [feed your soul, fight unbelief]

---

**How do you feed your soul?** The biblical model is “to remember the mighty acts of the Lord.” The generation that doesn’t “remember” is the generation that runs after other gods.

**Judges 8:33-34** Remember for your Faithfulness<sup>33</sup> No sooner had Gideon died than the Israelites again prostituted themselves to the Baals. They set up Baal-Berith as their god<sup>34</sup> and **did not remember** the LORD their God, who had rescued them from the hands of all their enemies on every side.

**Psalms 78:41-43**<sup>41</sup> Again and again they put God to the test; they vexed the Holy One of Israel.<sup>42</sup> They **did not remember** his power-- the day he redeemed them from the oppressor,<sup>43</sup> the day he displayed his miraculous signs in Egypt...

A generation that “remembers” *tells the stories* of God’s mighty saving actions. The idea is not that it’s a past history – it’s a **present history**.

**Heb 13:8** Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

**Hab 3:2** LORD, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O LORD. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy.

**We re-experience God’s saving actions in the retelling of the story.** We participate in Adam, Abraham, Moses, David.

**Psalms 77:11-20**<sup>11</sup> **I will remember** the deeds of the LORD; yes, **I will remember** your miracles of long ago.<sup>12</sup> I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds.<sup>13</sup> Your ways, O God, are holy. What god is so great as our God?<sup>14</sup> You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples.<sup>15</sup> With your mighty arm you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph. *Selah*<sup>16</sup> The waters saw you, O God, the waters saw you and writhed; the very depths were convulsed.<sup>17</sup> The clouds poured down water, the skies resounded with thunder; your arrows flashed back and forth.<sup>18</sup> Your thunder was heard in the whirlwind, your lightning lit up the world; the earth trembled and quaked.<sup>19</sup> Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen.<sup>20</sup> You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

**Psalms 78 and Psalm 105 and Nehemiah 9** all retell salvation history in big picture sweep. They model for us how we’re supposed to answer the question, “Who are we? What’s our story?”

The theme of “remembering” in the OT is probably more familiar to us in terms of people telling a **testimony**. There was **a time before the Bible was written**, when the stories were passed down as the family stories. Guess what? The bible is a collection of family stories. But that’s not all. God’s dealings in my life are your family history. God’s dealings throughout the world, regardless of age or

denomination – those are all my family stories too. They tell me about my God – what is possible – what faith looks like – and they tell me who I am.

**The Family Stories.** Bruchko (Bruce Olson) – that’s mine. So is John Wesley’s Aldersgate experience. Luther’s experience with Paul’s letter to the Romans - mine. And St. Francis leaving wealth behind to love everybody extravagantly? Mine. Athanasius suffering for the doctrine of the Trinity? That’s my story. Catherine of Sienna. Madame Guyon’s experience of the depths of Jesus’ love? Yeah. I’ll take that. The persecuted church in China? Uh huh. Trappist monk Thomas Merton’s story of wandering in the world before coming home to God and then the monastery? Mine. So is Russian Orthodox priest Alexander Schmemman’s brilliant insights into the meaning of the Lord’s Supper and how we view the world through it. George Mueller’s crazy dependence upon God through prayer? Yep. All my family history. It tells me who God is, and who I am.

We’ve got to **learn to see God’s grace** at work. It’s a skill. It requires understanding the Gospel. Otherwise we’ll miss it. But seeing God at work is a precious treasure. The **servants at the Cana** wedding got to see what the others didn’t. And as we develop eyes to see and hearts to cooperate with God, we’ll find ourselves in a brand new world...as though the whole story we’re in changed – but really we just began to see the truth.

**You can’t feed your soul on what God isn’t doing.** But that’s what many of us try to do! You must feed your soul on what God has done, is doing, and will do.

**My brother in law Rusty** is in a world of pain right now. We laughed together when I said, “Rusty, the Olive situation is one big question mark, and you can’t feed your soul on a question mark. You need to feed your soul on concrete things that God has done, is doing, and will do.” Uncertainty about some things is just a part of life in a fallen world, but you can’t feed your soul on question marks. You feed your soul on testimony.

**Robert’s knee or Carrie’s jaw?** What He chose to do, or what I wanted him to do but as of yet didn’t? Am I going to make a case for or against God’s faithfulness? Our focus can tend toward obsessing over what’s wrong. If that’s true, it doesn’t matter if we’re prayerful, sincere and passionate – the question at that point can easily become, “Why am I making a case against God’s faithfulness?”

**What will be our focus?** At the pool of Bethesda (jn 5) only one man was healed. Scripture ignores that multitude that Jesus passed by and instead focuses in on this one man’s story. Rather than asking questions about why Jesus didn’t heal the others, John tells us about how Jesus pulled back the veil and revealed God’s glory. If that happened today there would be books written to interview all the people whom Jesus left marginalized and oppressed by that water.

Or take the paralytic healed through Peter’s declaration early in the book of Acts. No mention of how many times Jesus passed him by...

**What’s my point?** We can live offended at God and in a place of human striving and dissatisfaction while surrounded by grace to which we’re oblivious because we’re not feeding our souls on what God is

doing, but rather we're giving our attention and conversation and praying and planning only to the gaps. Gaps between what we want, and what we got.

**Bellows** on the unlit coal or the smoldering one? Which one will be more effective?

We act like the **ten spies that give the evil report** (Numbers 13:32-33). We tell ourselves and others, "We'll never make it! There's giants in the land!" Their unbelieving fear ruined it for everybody. A whole generation missed God's best. Come forth Joshua and Caleb! Where are you Joshua and Caleb? Rise up among us!

**Telling the Story Rekindles Faith in Others but also in us!** Telling the July 11 lessons on the phone, or my conversion story to the GMS kids stirs up my own faith afresh.

**Repeat Stories of God's Activity Over and Over.**

**2Peter 1:12-15** <sup>12</sup> So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. <sup>13</sup> I think it is right to **refresh your memory** as long as I live in the tent of this body, <sup>14</sup> because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. <sup>15</sup> And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to **remember** these things.

Sometimes we think we should only tell a testimony of something that God did once or maybe twice. Certainly no more than once to the same person, right? Wrong! Scripture itself tells the same stories over and over, and we read it over and over and over. We're supposed to keep the testimonies of the Lord! That means tell them until they burn into our corporate memory – tell me what God did for you until I can tell myself and my children what God did for you when you've gone on to glory! Then, like Abel, your faith will continue to speak even though you've gone.

We should **have a church historian** just to document answered prayers, testimonies, words from God, providence, and the more subtle but still amazing signs of God's grace at work among us. Wouldn't that be awesome?

- **Little Stories** Tell us what He's Like too! Grace Mast and a prayer for Sweet Corn
- George Gleadow's son's car anointed with oil
- Scott Sturm's Eyes
- John Mishler's Heart Condition Healed
- Dema on the phone at 11pm once a week doing bible studies with a new Christian who had recently moved out of state.
- Eva Chupp's passing and the touching eulogy

Stories of what God has done, and is doing ought to be **told and retold from generation to generation.**

**Psalm 145:4** "One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts."

I want my boys to be able to tell their children the stories of how God moved in my life! And I hope they actually take my ceiling and make it their floor. I hope they take it further than I had time or vision to go.

This is why I want you in your Bibles every day!!! Not “because you should,” but because you *need God!*

**John Piper’s clip** about why he memorizes the Scriptures he does. Start at 1:06.

I want to ***heighten my expectations*** for what God may do, but I want to ***lessen my demands*** on what He must do if I’m to serve Him joyfully.

**So what are you feeding your soul?**

- You want to feed your soul with stories. Sermons. Biographies. Testimonies. Testimonies of men and women who were normal but who leaned upon the Lord and saw things that can only be explained if God exists and acts on behalf of those who wait for Him.
- You want to feed your soul in things that help you connect with the Lord at a heart level. Face to face.
- You want to find a small core group of friends whose passion for Christ challenges you. And then you want to intentionally seek God together and provoke each other to love and good deeds.
- And if you’re in a place of fear or grumbling, my prescription (which I myself use) is to get alone with God and cry out to Him. Download sermons from people like John Piper, Matt Chandler, CJ Mahaney, or Bill Johnson. Be much in God’s presence. Soak there. Make some declarations over your circumstances. Read Scriptures over them. And I know this may be hard, but it doesn’t always help to try to fit the world into your head. Understanding life isn’t always possible, but trusting God is.

Then after you’ve done all that I believe you’ll begin to see **God’s hand moving in subtle ways of His own choosing**, and to the degree that you’ve surrendered your dreams to His, you’ll be able to rejoice in the thing He *is* doing, even if it doesn’t look like the thing you so wanted.

Ask yourself, **“What am I transferring to others?”** Fear about the future? Complaints about people or problems? Worry about money? Or does hope rub off? Peace? Joy? Do people come away from an interaction with me thinking, “That poor person has got a lot on their plate”? Or do they come away from an interaction with you thinking not so much about you at all but rather, “Man. God is awesome!”

I believe that when Jesus was in **normal conversation there was an anointing of the Holy Spirit** on it that we often associate with powerful preaching. But it’s silly to restrict the activity of the Holy Spirit to an hour on Sunday. I’m not saying we are only supposed to talk about God, but I am saying that we’re called to carry the Presence as we’re washing dishes, teaching math, or framing up houses in a slow economy. Our daily conversations can reflect God’s faithfulness.

After a conversation with me, do people think **the sky is falling** OR that **God's got it**? Do they go away feeling that God has gone far away and left us sinners in charge OR do they feel that He is near and powerful and good?

**Glass half full? Get a smaller glass.** The Jewish Sabbath thing with the tiny wine glass and the big saucer. The overflow is for the guest. When we're empty we tend to turn inward and miss opportunities to strengthen others. When we're full of the Holy Spirit we're on the lookout for somebody to bless.