

Remember
Deuteronomy 6:4-9
John 14:23-29

When I was growing up, the church our family was a part of had a very active children's program. I remember vividly earning stickers and rewards for having memorized Bible verses that were assigned to us the week before. While I cannot recite all of the verses I had committed to memory, every now and then something triggers a memory and one of those verses will pop into my head. Those Bible verses often give me comfort or guidance when I need it.

It seemed like a useless chore as a child, but having memorized these verses meant that I could recall them even when a Bible was not around. Memorization is a great way to keep our lives focused on God's Word and the blessings God has given us. But memorization is only one small way we can keep our lives focused on God. Jesus calls us to remember his love for us and remember the things that he has done for us.

Remembering is not always as easy as we might think. Unless we set before us constant reminders, we are likely to forget. The more opportunities to remember God's love we let pass by, the less likely we are to remember it when we need to. Remembering takes effort and constant care.

We read how while Jesus was still in direct contact with his disciples he told them that he would be sending them an Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who would teach them and remind them of all that he had said to them. Jesus doesn't want us to forget that if we love him, then we will keep his word. If we love him, then we will remember the peace he has given us. If we love him, then we will find comfort having an Advocate on our side when we fall astray.

It reminds me of God's word to the Hebrews when he tells them the most important command of all: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might." It goes right along with Jesus saying, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them." The more we remember to love God, the better we will stay on track with God's guidance and live in God's blessings.

Deuteronomy six tells how important it is to love God by showing what it takes to keep God first in our lives: "Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

Today we might rewrite the text to say: Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Write them as your screensaver on your computer. Write them on a post it note on your car dashboard and sing God's word in your head as you wait in line at the store. Recite God's Word as you mow the lawn and pull the weeds. Read God's Word as you sip hot coffee and eat breakfast. Whatever it takes for you to remember, then just do it! The more you do to remember, the more likely you are to love God with all your heart, and all your soul, and with all your might. The more you do to remember, the more you will find Jesus by your side; able to be with you in times of joy and sadness.

I have witnessed the direct connection between remembering God's love and experiencing God's love. I witnessed a man die in peace because he knew without a doubt that Jesus was by his side in death. He took the needed time to always make sure that he stayed connected to God's Word. He prayed, studied scripture, and constantly did things to make sure he never forgot just how much God loved him. So when it was his time to die, he never once worried about what would happen to him in death. His faith and love for God gave him the strength and comfort he needed to die in peace.

I have also witnessed a young woman who strayed from God and her life became so filled with anxiety and fear that she lost control of who she was and how much God loved her. Because she let outsiders influence her decisions and forgot to pray and trust God, she easily forgot the gift God had given her in Jesus Christ. At first, she simply found other things to do in place of worship. Then the distance from God grew greater when she found less and less time to pray and remind herself of God's love. Her non-Christian friends pulled her into temptations and she found temporary gratification. The more she strayed from God, the more she forgot God's love. And the more her friends influenced her, the more she tried to please only herself. She eventually became so submerged in her selfishness that she left no room for God's love to fill her life.

Jesus knew that it is hard to always remember His love. This is why he often repeated himself and made extra effort to help people understand. But this is also why he did not leave us without an Advocate. Here in John, we read about how Jesus told his disciples that the Holy Spirit was on the way to remind us of the things Jesus has taught. With the help of the Holy Spirit we can remember.

But if we leave no room in our lives for the Holy Spirit then we leave no room for the Spirit's help in remembering God's love. Remembering takes effort; it takes time and diligence. But remembering is a big part of our salvation, and a big part of the comfort and hope we need to survive. Whatever you can do to help you remember, I encourage you to do it. Make it a constant daily habit to remember. Tony Campolo told in a lecture I attended one time many years ago that he wakes up in the morning and he lets God love him. He simply opens his arms wide, lays in bed, and fills himself with God's love. Every morning, he remembers to let God love him. What can you do everyday to remember God's love for you and to show your love for God? Whatever it is, make it a habit you cannot live without. For by constantly remembering, you risk living your life so that you never forget. Amen.

Prayer:

Loving God,
In you we find rest and peace. Help us never to forget your saving love for us. When we stray from your path, give us reminders to return and the diligence to make our efforts to remember successful. Amen.