

How Good is Your Memory?

Scripture Reading: Psalm 106:1-22

This lesson is not about the strength / health of your cognitive memory. Aging, diet, environment, drugs, and disease can affect that. But our subject is spiritual in nature. We will be discussing how well we use our memory to keep, store, use, and share important things about life. It takes desire, discernment, and diligence to recognize, remember, and preserve things that everyone should know and cherish. Our perspective about life will influence our involvement with truths that are of permanent value. Memories can be the celebrating of our personal opinions, preferences and pleasures – which is fine. But lasting values must have a priority. What are you doing to remember important things? What are you doing to help others remember important things?

Memorial Day has been established to honor those who died during military action, serving our nation. Where would we be without the efforts of those who sacrificed their lives for our nation's values and freedoms? Many people sacrificed their lives without dying. They suffered severe losses of mental / physical health. They were unable to function normally again. Their spouses, families and friends also suffered in their losses. So, it is sensible that we should pause to remember, to honor, and to be thankful for those who died in service to our nation. But it is in human nature to forget, to be preoccupied with our present pleasures and problems – to forget what happened before us and to fail to ponder what things would be like if others had not served.

In Ecclesiastes 9:14-15, we read a sad story.

“There was a little city with few men in it; and a great king came against it, besieged it, and built great snares (bulwarks / siegeworks) around it. Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that same poor man.”

Solomon goes on to comment, *“Wisdom is better than strength. Nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard.”* (Ecclesiastes 9:16 cp. Ecclesiastes 9:1-6) It is man's nature to forget the things of the past and to blunder into the future with partial understanding, or no understanding, or misunderstanding of what happened to create the situation that we are in (Ecclesiastes 1:11; 2:15-16; Judges 8:32-35). We may have cognitive ability, but not have the moral / ethical wisdom to learn from the past and value the lessons that could be learned. Pride can cause us to dismiss what others have said and done, leaving us to make up our own wisdom for the present and future of our lives / our world.

Psalm 106 is an historical psalm, citing a lengthy portion of Israel's story to make some powerful points about properly using our memories. In our Scripture reading (Psalm 106:1-22) there are three plain references to Israel deliberately forgetting God. It was not a mere cognitive weakness.

Psalm 106:7 – They chose to not remember God's mercies and goodness because they understood not the significance of God's previous wonderful actions. They could have humbly sought the Lord for understanding, but instead they proudly and stubbornly provoked Him.

Psalm 106:12-13 – Even when they understood and celebrated His words, they soon chose to forget God's good works and ignore His counsel.

Psalm 106:20-22 – As they made changes to their values and beliefs, creating their own culture, they were deliberately forgetting God. See Romans 1:18-32.

Besides these three plain references to Israel deliberately forgetting God, there are many other allusions to our topic. **(Psalm 106:1)** To be thankful, one must be thoughtful. **(Psalm 106:2)** One must choose to remember if they are going to "utter" and "declare" something. **(Psalm 106:4)** See the request made to God, based on things remembered about Him. **(Psalm 106:5)** To want to "see the good / look upon the benefits" of God's chosen people, to "rejoice in the gladness" of God's nation, to "glory" in God's inheritance, is to remember and celebrate the goodness of God.

Now let's look at how memory **can** work and how it **should** work:

Memory is not a perfect history of events. We don't usually have all the facts. We make mistakes. Our memories get cluttered / sidetracked with other things. Our memories are affected by our perspectives and opinions. Our memories are affected by our sources of information. We have filters which affect our memories. Our memories can be selective – filtering out good or bad things. Our motives can modify / change our memories. We can train and discipline our memories. Our memories can be used to lie, or to preserve and tell the truth. Our memories need to be submitted to God for good purposes – reinforced with the correct perspective of God's Word / God's Spirit.

What are you doing to remember important things?

What are you doing to help others remember important things? See Psalm 145:1-4; 45:17; 102:11-12.

See the following addendum – next page

Actively Remember the Lord. Don't just drift along through life. Here are some directives and perspectives from God's Word:

Remember God's character, power, and promises. Your life depends on Him.

See Psalm 16:1-11; 19:7-14; 20:7; 34:1-22; 63:1-8; 97:9-12; 77:1-12; 104:24,31,34; 105:1-5; 111:1-4; Proverbs 1:7-9; 9:10; Isaiah 26:3,8; 46:9-10; 55:6-13; John 8:30-32; 14:26; Acts 17:22-28; Romans 11:33-36; Hebrews 2:1; II Peter 1:2-4.

Remember God during times of prosperity. Don't take Him for granted. Be grateful. Remember why He is blessing you.

See Ecclesiastes 12:1; Deuteronomy 8:1-20 (Especially note vs. 1-3,10-11,18 cp. Exodus 13:3-7; 20:1-11; Deuteronomy 32:7-14); Psalm 103:1-5,17-18; Proverbs 30:7-9 – **Also remember the Lord when you are tested and tried.** See Psalm 42:1-5; 143:1-6; Philippians 4:8-13,19 (cp. Numbers 11:1-6).

Remember the heart of God – what He hates and what He loves. Exercise yourself with godly sorrow and godly joy.

See Deuteronomy 6:4-6; Psalm 97:10; Malachi 3:16-18; Ezekiel 9:4; Matthew 5:4-9; James 5:13; II Corinthians 7:8-11; Hebrews 12:1-3 (cp. Philippians 2:5; 3:1; 4:4-8).

Remember God, along with God's other people. Worship, praise, pray, learn, & serve together.

See Ephesians 5:14-21 (cp. Ephesians 2:11-22); Colossians 3:12-17; Philippians 1:3-8; I Corinthians 11:23-26; Hebrews 10:19-25; 13:3. **Remember the ministry that God has given you through others.** See Acts 20:31-35; I Corinthians 4:17; Colossians 4:18; I Thessalonians 1:2-6; 2:1-14; 3:5-8; II Thessalonians 2:5,13-15; II Timothy 2:14; Hebrews 13:7; II Peter 1:12-13,15; 3:1; Jude 1:17.

Remember God's warnings to examine yourselves and to continue faithfully.

See II Timothy 2:8-16; Revelation 2:5; 3:2-3.